



Effective Ideas for Improving the Educational Performance of Students with Disabilities

Newsline

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School Improvement and Student Achievement

School Improvement Tools Help ALL Students Achieve



Newsline

Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
Office of Special Education and Early
Intervention Services (OSE/EIS)
Director: Jacquelyn J. Thompson, Ph.D.

CEN Staff

Project Director: Donald A. Burke, Ed.D.
Associate Project Director: Linda A. Lynch
Editor: Holly Spence Sasso, M.A.
Communication Specialist: Lori Schulze
Program Assistants: Teri Bullock, Aimee Cain,
Annette Gorden, Robin Wolever
Writers: Shirley A. Beckman, Linda Wacyk,
Judy Winter
Contributing Writers:
Kathy Bradford
T.J. Bucholz
Ron Greiner
Jane Jacobs
Shari Krishnan
Sandi Laham
Susan A. Lentz
Ginny Palubin
Bernard Travnika

Graphic Design: Trillium Graphic Design, Mason, MI

State Board of Education

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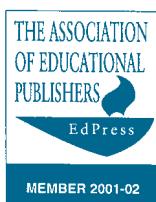
Ex Officio Members

John Engler, Governor
Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Superintendent of
Public Instruction

Direct all inquiries to:

CEN NEWSLINE
Eaton Intermediate School District
1790 East Packard Highway
Charlotte, MI 48813
(800) 593-9146 #6
(517) 541-1318 #6
(517) 321-6101 #6
(517) 541-1351 fax
hss@eaton.k12.mi.us

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On our Cover...

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School Improvement and student achievement go hand in hand. School improvement is a collaborative process through which staff identifies strengths and weaknesses of the school program and uses that information as a basis for making positive changes that result in improvement in observable and measurable student outcomes.

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The Center for Educational Networking (CEN) is a project awarded by the Michigan Department of Education to Eaton Intermediate School District (EISD). *NEWSLINE* is produced by CEN for OSE/EIS through a PL 105-17, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, state discretionary project grant. Contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Michigan Department of Education or Eaton ISD, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement. Some photographs are used solely for graphic presentation and do not necessarily represent individuals with disabilities. This information is in the public domain unless otherwise indicated. Readers are encouraged to copy and share articles, but proper credit must be given.

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Thomas D. Watkins Jr.

When I became Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state of Michigan, I introduced the concept of a decision-making yardstick. Imprinted on this yardstick is a simple phrase—"Show Me How This Helps Teachers Teach and Children Learn."

With this yardstick in hand, I invited individuals within the Michigan Department of Education and education stakeholders out in the field to ask themselves, "How do the programs I'm involved in help teachers to teach and students to learn?"

MI-Access, Michigan's new assessment for students with severe impairments offers a positive response to this question in the form of a tool that will help teachers to teach and students to learn. For the first time in our educational history, we have statewide, standardized data to show what students with disabilities, categorized by age, know and can do. Certainly, teachers in the classroom have had this information for years, but until now, it was difficult to share data in an organized and common way across the state. MI-Access will help us do just that.

MI-Access is one component of the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS). It was inaugurated statewide in 2002 and is designed specifically for students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Program Teams (IEPT) have determined it is inappropriate for them to participate in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), even with assessment accommodations. MI-Access was developed, in part, in response to the overriding belief that *ALL* students deserve full access to opportunities to achieve. One way to help students achieve is to determine what they need to learn and to develop assessment opportunities to determine whether they are learning it.

Another goal of the MI-Access was to assist the State Board of Education in achieving specific policies, priorities, and goals. The two State Board goals that relate most directly to MI-Access call for Michigan to increase the participation and performance of students with disabilities in statewide assessments and to develop guidelines for alternate assessments for students for whom participation in the MEAP is not appropriate.

MI-Access provides students with disabilities the opportunity to access the high standards reflected in Michigan's *Model Content Standards* contained in the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*, approved by the State Board of Education for the general curriculum. Access to these high standards and the statewide assessment system will result in more meaningful results for reporting the

progress of students with disabilities. In addition to alignment with the *Model Content Standards*, MI-Access uses components of the *Addressing the Unique Educational Needs of Students with Disabilities* (AUEN) as a framework for its assessment activities.

MI-Access was designed differently than most standardized assessments. Instead of being a paper and pencil test like the MEAP, the current MI-Access assessments use teacher observation. Students are observed as they carry out a standard set of activities during the course of a normal school day. Then, teachers score students using a standardized scoring guide (which, on some assessments, can be individualized for a particular student).

Recognizing that this fall will be the first time any of us see MI-Access results, I am sure there will be many questions about the data and what they tell teachers, administrators, parents, and others about student performance. At the Michigan Department of Education, we have developed some exciting new tools—including a handbook for interpreting results and an executive summary of the handbook on CD-ROM. We believe that these items will be helpful in answering some of the questions you may have. Our outstanding MI-Access staff also stands ready to assist you with interpreting and using the MI-Access data in meaningful ways.

In the long term, MI-Access ensures that students with disabilities are included in *Education YES!—A Yardstick for Excellent Schools*, Michigan's new accreditation system, and that students with disabilities are assessed with the same frequency as students in general education. MI-Access is just one of the ways we can ensure that *ALL* students in Michigan have every opportunity to succeed. I am proud of the work that we have all done to make this effort a reality, and I hope that you will take time to review this worthwhile endeavor.



Tom Watkins

Director of the OSE/EIS

Jacquelyn J. Thompson, Ph.D.

The era of standards-based accountability demands attention to student achievement for *ALL* students. This includes a focus on high standards, data-driven decisions about instruction, ongoing assessment of student learning, and personnel development that supports teaching and learning outcomes. This is, in essence, the school improvement framework.

We are very excited about the collaboration between Title I and special education that is showcased in this issue of *Newsline*. A variety of schools share their learning and successes in focusing on school improvement and student achievement.

The results are the message: *ALL* students, including those with disabilities, learn, achieve, and succeed!

Jacquelyn J. Thompson



Guest Editor

Jane Jacobs, Title I, Part A Consultant,
Michigan Department of Education, Office of Field Services

The Office of Field Services Facilitates the Improvement of Student Achievement in Michigan



Jane Jacobs

The Michigan Department of Education, Office of Field Services (OFS) facilitates the improvement of student achievement in Michigan by collaborating with school districts on the implementation of their school improvement plans through identification, coordination, and utilization of categorical programs and other resources.

The OFS is responsible for ensuring that the resources available to school districts are focused and targeted on improved student learning for all students. This responsibility includes the administration of several state and federal programs. A major program for OFS is Title I, Part A of the *Improving America's School Act of 1994*, which is designed to help disadvantaged children meet high academic standards.

The OFS staff approaches each school and school district with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to help that school or district determine where they are in the school improvement process, what their immediate needs are, and how field services staff can best assist the district.

The Office of Field Services is divided into two units: Central Support and Regional Services. The Central Support Unit is responsible for providing knowledge and expertise to assist and support the regional teams in their work with schools and school districts. The Central Support Unit is responsible for the administration of the OFS state and federal programs. For the grant programs, this responsibility includes applying to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) for federal program funds, distributing funds to school districts, and reporting financial data and program results. Additionally, this unit is responsible for contributing expertise in areas such as school improvement, technology, assessing progress, and program requirements.

The Regional Services Unit is responsible for providing assistance to schools and school districts with focus on targeting resources for improved student learning for all students. This assistance includes coordinating the categorical resources for which the office is responsible, as well as other state and regional financial and nonfinancial resources for most effective use. The staff of this unit customizes its services to accommodate the needs of each school and district.

Programs	Description
Federal:	
Title I, Part A	Designed to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students.
Title I, Part C	Designed to support high quality comprehensive education programs for migratory children.
Title I, Part D	Provides supplementary services to children and youth in state agencies and local institutions.
Title I, Part F	Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD) designed to help high needs schools improve student achievement by implementing comprehensive school reform programs.
Title II	Designed to support teachers in their work and ensure that every public school student has the chance to learn from a highly qualified teacher. Includes Class Size Reduction program.
Title III	Formerly Bilingual Education and Emergency Immigrant Program. Designed to provide language instruction for Limited English Proficient (LEP) and immigrant students.
Title V, Part A	Formerly Title VI. Designed to support local innovation and reforms to raise achievement levels by increasing flexibility with federal requirements in exchange for enhanced accountability of student performance.
Title VI	Authorizes transferability of funds.
State:	
Section 31a	Provides funding to eligible districts for supplementary instructional and pupil support services for pupils who meet the at-risk criteria specified in the legislation.
Section 32e	Designed to reduce class size in grades 1-3.
Section 41	Designed to support bilingual instruction for pupils of limited English-speaking ability.

For more information, contact:

Jane Jacobs, Office of Field Services
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, (517) 241-1162
jacobsj@michigan.gov

Five Distinguished Schools Are Featured in this Issue of *Newsline*

Title I, Part A of the *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994* requires each state educational agency to establish a statewide support system for the improvement of student achievement in Title I schools. One required component of this support system is the designation of Title I distinguished schools, which are schools that exceed the state's definition of adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years. Educators from these schools then share information with other schools in the state and may provide assistance to those identified as needing improvement.

Of the five schools selected by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Field Services to participate in interviews for *Newsline*, four are Title I Distinguished Schools: Springview Elementary, Challenging Elementary, Morse Elementary, and Hancock Elementary.

The Office of Field Services also invited Marquette School District to participate in this information sharing issue of *Newsline*. Staff members from the Marquette district were recognized as part of a cadre of Michigan's top educators invited to meet with the State Board of Education to discuss ways to improve the quality of education in Michigan. Marquette School District then chose Vandenboom Elementary to participate in the *Newsline* interview.

The Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services chose Townsend, Vandercook Lake School District, and Navigator, Pinckney School District, to represent the schools involved in the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process.

The Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services Provides Leadership and Administration of Special Education Services

The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) Is a Continuous Improvement Process Monitored by the OSE/EIS

The function of the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) is to oversee the administration and funding of education and early intervention programs and services for young children and students with disabilities. Dr. Jacquelyn J. Thompson, Director, provides the leadership and administrative oversight for three units within the OSE/EIS.

The three units are: 1) Policy, Planning, and Compliance; 2) Finance and Program Management; and 3) Quality Assurance. The primary focus of each unit is to ensure that early intervention services and a free appropriate public education is provided to eligible children and youth from birth through age 25.

As a Special Education Consultant within the Quality Assurance Unit, one of my primary assignments has been to develop, apply, and evaluate the implementation of the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process to improve the performance of students with disabilities. Using a competitive grant process, six schools were identified as pilot study sites for the QAR process.

The six schools are: 1) Navigator, Pinckney School District; 2) Parkside, Rockford School District; 3) Pattengill, Berkley School District; 4) Sparta, Sparta School District; 5) Townsend, Vandercook Lake School District; and 6) Winchell, Kalamazoo School District.

The QAR is a continuous improvement process that is based on a comprehensive review of continuous improvement process literature and aligned to all state and federal school improvement legislation. The eight components of the QAR are: 1) Gather Multi-Source Data, 2) QAR Self-Assessment, 3) Analyze Data Results, 4) Identify Additional Data, 5) Improvement Planning Process, 6) Develop Goals, 7) Implement Goals in Action Plan, and 8) Report to the Public. All eight components can be successfully applied to any initiative using data as a decision-making tool for improvement.

During the first year, 2000–2001, the QAR was implemented in each pilot study school at the system level. Technical assistance was provided, specifically focused on: system-level reform; alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessments; Action Plan development; and system-based analysis of student performance data. One of the major findings after the first year was a new awareness that, while the QAR was driving systems reform, it was *not necessarily* improving student performance. As a result, the eight components of the QAR process were implemented at the student level to use multi-source data to determine the goal(s) and short-term objectives for a student's individualized education program (IEP).

To operationalize this process, OSE/EIS conducted an Action Research project within the six QAR pilot study school sites in 2001–2002. Each site selected three students with different disabilities for the project and notified parents. Assessments and their respective results were gathered for each student from each core content area identified in the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*, Core Content Areas: English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. After analyzing the data, universal skills were

identified, for each student, that transcend all core content areas. The hypothesis was that students with disabilities experience their disability throughout all different educational and learning situations. Therefore, students' unique needs to learn specific universal skills occur in each core content area. During the process, the special education service provider completed an anecdotal journal for each student. Results of the 18 journals are currently being analyzed by the

OSE/EIS. Results will be available October 20, 2002 from the Michigan Department of Education, OSE/EIS.

Four of the six QAR pilot study school sites are approaching the third year of their competitive QAR grant and each will begin mentoring another school, within their respective district, in the QAR process. Expected outcomes are to: 1) build internal capacity to sustain the QAR process to improve the performance of students with disabilities in the district and 2) sustain the true learning of the QAR process within the school by teaching it to others.

While each of the four QAR schools will be the primary mentor for the new QAR school within its respective school district, all six QAR pilot study schools will continue meeting quarterly in Lansing, Michigan and on-site, between each quarterly meeting, to receive technical assistance. A draft *QAR Mentoring Guide* has been developed with input from the schools and is based on a comprehensive review of the literature.

Each QAR school files a *QAR End of Year Report* each year of the grant. The report is an evaluation of the pilot study school's status toward satisfying the grant objectives and improving student performance. The data from the 2000–2001 grant year is now available and a comparative analysis of two years' data is anticipated by October 2002.

Can the QAR process be replicated? Are there any plans to share the QAR process with other schools? To date, the data, working papers, and technical assistance evaluations indicate that the QAR process is "doable" by teams of parents, teachers, and administrators without compromise. Many changes have been made and more will be made to reach a format for statewide application to improve the performance of students with disabilities. Additional information and direction will be based upon a further analysis of three years of QAR data, which will be available after June 30, 2003.



Kathy Bradford



For more information, contact:

Kathy Bradford

Office of Special Education and
Early Intervention Services

Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909

(517) 335-0445, bradfordk@michigan.gov

New Law Continues School Improvement Efforts through New Accountability Measures



Jane Jacobs, Title I, Part A Consultant, Michigan Department of Education, Office of Field Services

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* that amended the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA). Contained within ESEA is the Title I, Part A, legislation that provides schools the resources to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. Although the new Title I legislation retains many of the previous requirements, it now places a greater emphasis on accountability for improving academic achievement. Specifically, there is a shift in focus from the previous legislation's emphasis on development and implementation of high standards for all students to accountability for these standards through increased testing requirements; increased information collection; and publication of information on student achievement, school performance, and teacher quality. What is most dramatic in this shift to accountability is the application of these requirements to all schools, not just to Title I schools (Sec.1111).

Because all Michigan public school academies (PSAs), local public school districts, and individual public schools are required, under P.A. 25, to develop school improvement plans, Title I planning requirements are incorporated into these existing plans. If a Title I PSA, local public school district, or individual public school is identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring status under the new legislation, then the school improvement plans must be revised or rewritten to address the specific requirements that are outlined in the law [Sec. 1116 (b)(3)(A)].

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, all Title I and non-Title I PSA, district, and school plans must continue to describe how local district standards are aligned with state standards, classroom instruction, assessment, and professional development. However, the new emphasis on accountability through annual math and reading/language arts state assessments in grades 3-8 (science by 2007-08) will necessitate developing plans designed to help all students meet the academic achievement standards. Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is a key component in moving toward a goal of all students performing at the proficient level of state assessments by the end of 12 years (2014). AYP will not only measure the progress of all students but also that of four student subgroups: economically disadvantaged students, racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students (LEP). Districts and schools will also be held accountable for the progress of LEP students in developing English proficiency. The legislation requires an annual assessment of student English oral language, reading, and writing skills.

The focus is not only on the new legislation and student accountability, but also on teacher quality. District plans must ensure

that all teachers are highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year. For Title I schools, all new Title I paraprofessionals must have two years of college, or an associate's degree, or pass a formal assessment of knowledge and ability to assist in teaching reading, writing, and math. (Title I paraprofessionals hired prior to the new legislation will have until January 8, 2006 to meet the requirements) [Sec. 1112(2)(b)(c)(g), Sec.1119].

If a Title I PSA, district or school fails to show continual improvement in state assessment results, the legislation requires consequences. There is a wide range of consequences that include the following: revising or rewriting the school improvement plan; substantial professional development; specified technical assistance; optional transfer of students within the district to a school not identified for improvement; supplemental educational services provided by an outside agency/entity; corrective actions affecting administration, staff, and/or curriculum; and restructuring the school's governance arrangement [(Sec.1116)(b)].

Even though the Title I requirements listed above apply only to Title I schools, the new ESEA reauthorization requires that challenging academic content standards and a state accountability system apply to all schools and to all students regardless of a Title I status (Sec.1111). In Michigan, state accountability requirements for all schools will be met in the provisions outlined in *Education Yes!* In order to meet the high expectations set by ESEA, it is suggested that stakeholders consider ways to work together within their respective PSA, local district, and individual school to understand how the new requirements compare to their current school improvement plans and to ensure that school improvement planning efforts under the new legislation are directed to the academic success of all students so that no child is left behind.

Editor's Note: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is a 1,080 page document. The entire statute, or summaries, can be viewed on the Library of Congress THOMAS Web site at <http://thomas.loc.gov>. Type H.R.1. in the search area under bill number.

Jane Jacobs serves as a Title I, Part A Consultant to the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Field Services. She is assigned to the Central Support Unit.

For more information, contact:
Jane Jacobs, Office of Field Services
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 241-1162
jacobsj@michigan.gov

On-Site Review Raises Expectations for School Improvement and Student Achievement

Jane Jacobs, Title I, Part A Consultant, Michigan Department of Education, Office of Field Services

On-site Reviews are conducted by the Office of Field Services (OFS) for school districts that have one or more state and federal programs funded through OFS. There are four purposes for On-site Review:

- To fulfill the Michigan Department of Education's oversight responsibilities for the state and federal programs administered by OFS
- To encourage program coordination and collaboration
- To help OFS consultants identify the program development and improvement needs of the school district
- To identify effective programs and practices for dissemination purposes

One of the key components of the On-site Review is the *On-site Review Study Guide*. This document guides the review process through nine categories: high academic standards, alignment of standards, core academic curriculum, instruction and assessment, school improvement, program services, student selection, professional development, parent involvement, and private school involvement. Each of these nine categories is divided into subsections that describe specific state and federal requirements for each program.

Prior to the scheduled On-site Review, the district and school stakeholders are expected to individually rate each category subsection that applies to the state and federal programs within their district and school. Following this individual rating, the stakeholders prepare a consensus *On-site Review Study Guide* document. A rating guideline or rubric provides the stakeholders with a description of High, Moderate, Low, and Change Required categories for use when rating the individual and preparing the consensus documents.

During the On-site Review, the team of OFS consultants and other participants, as well as the district and school level stakeholders (program directors/managers, principal, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and other participants), use the consensus document as the basis for discussion and program review. Each school participating in the On-site Review must also have documentation available to support its responses to the study guide. The

documentation provides evidence from existing materials and practices, including classroom lesson plans, projects, checklists.

Preparation and participation in the On-site Review process clarifies, for districts and stakeholders, the connections to achievement expectations for all students. These connections are evident in the On-site Review discussions, which point to the following:

1. Districts/schools work toward alignment of academic content standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment and expect all students to achieve within that framework.
2. The district school improvement plans include program planning and delivery to target populations.
3. Student achievement data are disaggregated and used to monitor and adjust instructional programming.
4. Supplemental instruction is provided in all of the core academic areas and multiple instructional strategies are used.
5. The professional development plan supports the goals of the school improvement plan, as well as the content areas identified by the *Adequate Yearly Progress* (AYP) report (see "New Law Continues School Improvement Efforts through New Accountability Measures" on page 4).

Responses from school districts to the OFS indicate that the On-site Review process is a positive experience for all involved. It opens dialogue, raises awareness levels about expectations for student achievement, and creates an atmosphere for ongoing improvement in the education of all students.

For more information, contact:
Jane Jacobs, Michigan Department of Education
Office of Field Services
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 241-1162
jacobsj@michigan.gov

Title I Services Are Delivered Using the Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance Model

Jane Jacobs, Title I, Part A Consultant, Michigan Department of Education, Office of Field Services

The vast majority of Michigan school districts qualify for Title I funding. Title I service eligibility is determined by Title I funding eligibility requirements. The determination of school eligibility is calculated with a formula that is outlined in the Title I legislation and is based on the number of children from low income families.

Michigan delivers Title I services to students through two different models. Once the eligible schools are identified, the Local Education Agency (LEA) decides upon the most appropriate model—schoolwide or targeted assistance.

The most commonly used model is the Targeted Assistance Program. The Targeted Assistance Program provides supplemental

services to identified students who are failing or at the highest risk of failing the district's content standards and benchmarks that are expected for all students.

The Schoolwide Program model funds a comprehensive school plan to upgrade instruction for all students in schools where at least 40 percent of the students come from low-income families. A full year of planning by the school staff is required before this model can be implemented. The schoolwide program does not identify a specific group of students for services. However, if disaggregated assessment data identify an academic need among specific groups

Continued on page 19...

Administrator's Perspective

Bee Excellent!

Morse Elementary Principal Creates a Culture of Kindness that Leads to Success

Linda Wacyk, Writer

TITLE I SCHOOL

Morse Elementary School
475 Cherry Dr.
Troy, MI 48083
(248) 823-3200
(248) 823-4013 fax
www.troy.k12.mi.us

Principal: Jan Hagland

Grades K-6: 376 students
13% reduced lunch

Principal Jan Hagland believes the words penned by author Frank Peretti in his 2000 book, *The Wounded Spirit* (see quote below left). She believes so strongly in the book's message that she purchased a copy for each member of her staff at Morse Elementary School in Troy, Michigan. She followed the gift with an invitation to optional after-school "book talks" to explore the author's ideas and their implications for the school. These efforts, along with Hagland's vision, led to a full-staff commitment to actively create a positive school climate that helps all students feel accepted and ready to succeed.

"The whole team worked together to write learning values for the school," Hagland, a veteran Troy teacher and principal at Morse since 1999, said. "We involved kids in writing the definitions and then spent lots of time teaching procedures for following the codes."

The school scrapped a long list of do's and don'ts and replaced them with four simple Morse School Rules: *Be Kind, Be Safe, Be a Peacemaker, and Teach Peace*. To highlight the rules, the school adopted the Morse Bee as their mascot. Hagland herself acts as "queen bee," even dressing as a bumblebee for special occasions.

Now, Hagland's office—maybe the whole school—is overrun with stuffed bees, paper bees, painted bees, and ceramic bees. These are gifts from loyal staff, parents, and a growing list of fans—a list that now includes the U.S. Department of Education, which this year recognized Morse Elementary as a Title I Distinguished School, one of only 95 nationwide and the only school in Michigan to earn the award this year.

The school's new "tough as necessary" behavior code is only one factor leading to Morse's success. In fact, if given a chance, Hagland would rather talk about the dedication of her staff (100 percent are seeking advanced degrees or other professional growth) or the quality of the school's stu-



Jan Hagland and two fifth grade students celebrate the Blue Ribbon School Award appointed to Morse Elementary School by the Michigan State Board of Education

dents, who are among the poorest in the district and speak 43 different dialects.

So what are Hagland's success secrets?

1. Professional development: In addition to the usual in-service trainings, Hagland hosts a summer planning retreat at her home, an August back-to-school session, and after-school team meetings during which discussions focus on single topics, such as literacy, social studies, or instructional themes. An end-of-the-year meeting allows staff to evaluate the year and learn from one another. Last year, Morse teachers attended Junior Classroom Learning, a balanced literacy training that includes both teachers and para-professionals, making it easier for them to work as a team. "You can't go into the teacher's lounge now without hearing teachers talking about what to try or how to improve," Hagland said.

2. Create dialogue: "Relationships are key to student success," Hagland said. "We work on building congeniality among the staff. This leads to collegial relationships, which, in turn, raise student achievement." Hagland also works hard to keep communication channels open between staff and administrators, team teachers, and school and home. The colorful Morse

"Whatever attitude the school leadership displays will trickle down through the student body. If teasing a younger kid is okay, then having no regard for the feelings of others is okay. If the principal and teachers remain aloof and indifferent toward bullying, the kids will remain indifferent and simply watch as it goes on all around them....If the school leadership, from the outset, establishes a policy of mutual respect at all levels and backs it up with rules, instruction, procedures, and example, we just might have a safer, more ennobling school...."

—Frank Peretti



Continued on page 9 ...

Teacher's Perspective

Teaching for Excellence Requires Data, a Good Attitude, and Support

Linda Wacyk, Writer

Karen Reese is one busy teacher. As one of eight multi-age teachers at Morse Elementary School in Troy, Michigan, she meets the daily demands of a transient group of first- and second-grade pupils, many of them poor, and many English Language Learners. In addition, she co-chairs the School Improvement Team and the new North Central Accreditation (NCA) team, whose goal is to achieve NCA accreditation for the school. She also serves as a teacher leader and trainer for the Michigan Literacy Progress Profile (MLPP).

Still, Reese was eager to talk about the school's focus on student achievement and how data are used to support the school improvement, student achievement process. Morse Elementary School's strategy demands a lot from teachers, but Reese said it also helps them focus on goals.

"Teachers need to learn that data are their friend," Reese said, "but when data are removed from the classroom, it becomes meaningless. Data help you prioritize the zillion things that need to be done. Data forces you to ask, 'What is most important for the children?'"

Reese admits that assessment alone won't improve students learning. The keys to successfully using data to drive instruction are attitude and support. Specifically, Reese cites a few elements at Morse that help teachers grow:

1. **Commitment to teamwork:** Morse uses a team approach in everything from classroom instruction to improving parent involvement. Reese believes team teaching helps teachers keep growing. They push each other to improve, which drives student success.
2. **Continual professional development:** Once teachers understand the *value* of assessment-driven instruction, they need to build their "instructional toolbox" of techniques that work. Then, they can comfortably apply what they know. These



Karen Reese works with students on a hands-on activity during a Title 1 after-school enrichment program for families.

"tools" come via expert advice or simply by sharing ideas with colleagues.

3. **Shared decision making:** Morse's team is effective, in part, because district policies allow the school's leaders flexibility. Policies also support the principal's needs regarding staffing, time management, and resources at the classroom level.

At Morse, the assessed needs of the students drive every decision and every strategy. Reese says that can only be good news for teachers. "At Morse, kids are number one, but making it better for them makes it better for teachers."

Bee Excellent! (continued from page 8...)

Messenger newsletter goes home with students monthly and includes up to 20 pages of school and community news. More importantly, parents are considered an active part of the education team at Morse, with parents participating in goal-setting activities, surveys, and workshops to improve their ability to support their children's learning. "We have no more parent resistance to discipline," Hagland said, "because they were actively involved in the process and the planning of the new code."

3. **High expectations—for all:** Morse offers a variety of ways for all students to access the general curriculum and to be successful. Flexible grouping allows maximum inclusion. Morse offers tutorial help—both in school and after school—for every grade level. Reading Recovery and other literacy efforts pull together a team of professionals, all focused on student achievement. This team includes an English as second language (ESL) coordinator,

special education staff, literacy specialists, and Title I tutors who work together with classroom teachers. Hagland herself serves as the instructional leader, bringing her strong and diverse teaching background and experience as a coordinator for a gifted and talented program.

"Because of our approach, we don't expect low quality," said Hagland. "We expect good behavior from all our kids, and we help them make good choices. At Morse, kids all learn in the same way—no one is seen as 'disabled' or 'at-risk.' We talk about learning differences where everyone finds and celebrates their strengths."

Wounded Spirit by Frank Peretti, Nashville: Word, 2000

Marquette's Vandenboom Elementary School Emphasizes Literacy

Lori Schulze, Communication Specialist

TITLE I SCHOOL

Vandenboom Elementary School
2000 Erie Ave.
Marquette, MI 49855
(906) 225-4320
(906) 225-5340 fax
www.maps2000.k12.mi.us

Principal: Maxine Olson

Grades K-5: 250 students
24% reduced lunch

Mission Statement

The staff of Vandenboom Elementary believes that ALL students can learn and achieve mastery of basic skills. We accept responsibility, in collaboration with the home and community, to teach ALL students so that they can attain their maximum educational potential and become responsible, contributing members of society.

The School Improvement Plan at Vandenboom Elementary in the Marquette Area Public School District has eight goals for all of its graduates. The plan states that a Vandenboom graduate will:

1. Read at the fifth-grade level or above;
2. Write a three-paragraph essay, having a beginning, a middle, an end, correct grammar, coherence, and legibility;
3. Solve two-step math problems and will add, subtract, multiply, and divide two-digit numbers;
4. Use study skills—research, graphic organizers, and note taking organization;
5. Understand his/her niche in the global environment;
6. Understand his/her role as a citizen of the community and country;
7. Resolve conflicts peacefully; and
8. Pass the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests.

An emphasis on literacy helps promote school achievement at the 250-student school that is located in the Upper Peninsula. To ensure that no student falls behind, the school has implemented the STARS Program (Students and Teachers Accelerating Reading Skills) through an All Students Achieve Program-Literacy Achievement Program (ASAP-LAP) grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Education to Marquette Area Public Schools.

The purpose of the program is two-fold: to provide a balanced, research-based early literacy program that will accelerate student achievement for students at risk, and to provide intensive professional development for all elementary staff, giving them the skills necessary to reach the at-risk learner. Early results indicate that both purposes have been met successfully.

The program was designed for students in grades K-3. The program began with summer school activities in 2001 prior to

the program's full implementation during the 2001-02 school year. Students previously identified as Title I students made up the initial pool of students. The Michigan Literacy Progress Profile (MLPP) and Work Sampling System (WSS) instruments were used to

identify the 25 percent of those students in Marquette Area Public Schools with the greatest need. The students selected received service in small groups or one-on-one settings four times a week. The rationale for such early intervention was that deficits addressed and overcome early in a student's career would limit or diminish the need for additional compensatory services.

Although study of the data is ongoing, post-tests of the MLPP and WSS given at the end of the academic year show very positive results. Based on a comparison of pre- and post-tests in eight assessment areas, of the 44 first-grade students tested, 30 students (68 percent) increased their scores or achieved grade level in all eight areas at the end of the school year. Data from one of the eight tests, that of sight word decoding, are typical of the results. Of the 41 students pre-tested, some of whom had performed too low to register on the pre-test, 17 students (41 percent) post-tested at or above first-grade level, with two students post-testing at a third-grade level. Results for the kindergarten and second grade populations are similar.

A key to the success of this program has been the intensive professional development provided for all teachers. Teachers received MLPP training, WSS training, and Structured Linguistics training. In addition teachers participated in book studies and other professional development activities.

At Vandenboom, the STARS program is implemented by teacher Marie Somers and paraprofessional Kathy Keough. Both believe the program helps identify students who might ultimately need special education services.

"We bombard them with reading skills five days a week for a half-hour at a time,"

Continued on page 13...



Hancock Elementary School Works Hard to Collaborate with Parents

Lori Schulze, Communication Specialist

"Parents are their child's most important teachers."

These words are inscribed on a sign leading into Hancock Elementary School, home to 445 students in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Principal Edward Longenecker and his staff take great pride in working together and collaborating with the parents of all their students.

Hancock was recognized as a Title I Distinguished School, in part, for its partnership with parents. A banner commemorating the Title I honor hangs proudly in the main hallway of the 13-year-old building. Teachers work hard to keep parents informed and also to let them experience, first-hand, what their children are learning.

Family science night is one of the best attended events at the school. The event draws about 200 parents and students. Students are required to attend with their parents or another adult—a grandparent or neighbor, for example. Parents participate in different science activities and experiments that are appropriate for their child's grade level.

"It's a wonderful program, very hands-on. Parents love it and students love it," Longenecker said. "We also have a family math night, and currently, we are working on a family social studies night for next year."

The school has also worked with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) on understanding the types of assessments that are used and at what grade levels. Longenecker has taken outdated Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests that have been released and given them to the PTO to take the released items as a test so that the parents can experience what their children are experiencing.

"Parents were amazed and I think it helped them to understand how much their children are expected to do," Longenecker said.

The staff at Hancock Elementary has also found that communicating with parents has helped in the success of their Child Study Teams, a program designed to assist teachers and staff with students who are having difficulties academically or behaviorally. Often, the Child Study Team is used as part of a pre-referral process.

Started three years ago, the team is headed by Rich Krznarich, the school's counselor. In addition to Krznarich, the team includes the

principal, an at-large general education member, special education teachers, a Title I representative, and an intermediate school district psychologist. In addition, the team will draw on other people as warranted. For example, the teacher of the student who is being studied or a therapist might participate.

The team meets twice a month, sometimes more often, if needed. Typically, the team meets for 30-40 minutes per child and discusses at least two students per session. A form is used to define the student's areas of difficulty; then, as recommendations are made during the meeting, the form is completed and added to the student's records.

"The team meeting and record keeping help in the pre-referral process. After the team meeting, behaviors and efforts to intervene in negative behavior are documented to prove, 'Yes, we really do need to refer because these are all of the things that we have tried,'" Krznarich said. "It's made our referrals better—we know that we are going down the right road. It's always good to hear colleagues giving suggestions."

"The school psychologist has excellent skills for communicating with the parents," Krznarich added. "She keeps parents informed along the way and parent responses are a good way to stay in touch with what parent concerns are. It goes a long way in keeping the parents involved in the process."

Excellent teachers and involved parents have been a successful combination for Hancock Elementary and no one recognizes that more than Longenecker, who has been principal since the school opened its doors in 1989. "I'm very lucky because I have a wonderful staff," he said. "We are in constant contact with parents, and the follow-through on student achievement is exceptional."



TITLE I SCHOOL

Hancock Elementary School
1201 N. Elevation St.
Hancock, MI 49930

(906) 487-9030

(906) 487-9041 fax
elongene@ccisd.k2.mi.us

Principal: Edward Longenecker

Grades K-5: 445 students

50% reduced
lunch



Family science night brings Hancock students and parents together to participate in science activities and experiments.

At Springview, School Improvement Tools Include Administrative Involvement, Professional Development, and Student Feedback

Shirley A. Beckman, Writer

TITLE I SCHOOL

Springview Elementary School
1233 Springview
Flushing, MI 48433
(810) 591-0680
(810) 591-0575 fax
www.flushing.k12.mi.us

Principal: Kip Hogan

Grades K-6: 472 students
17% reduced lunch



Mission Statement

We, the educational family of Springview Elementary School, believe that through the unified efforts of student, teacher, and parent, all children will achieve academic success within their own individual learning potential. It is our responsibility to provide an atmosphere, which is warm, safe, and supportive where students can develop self-discipline, respect for others, and become contributing members of our community and society.

Springview Elementary School in Flushing, Michigan has four school improvement goals. The goals are listed in the district calendar, which is sent home to parents annually.

Communication: *All students will improve informational reading skills across the curriculum.*

Problem solving and critical thinking-math: *All students will improve their ability to apply math concepts to problem solving computations.*

Problems solving and critical thinking-science: *All students will maintain an 85% or better in the district Science Criterion Referenced Tests and show improvement on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) science test.*

Student responsibility and respect for others: *All students will be able to solve conflicts without physical or verbal abuse.*

Springview has reached its reading goal and earned a Distinguished Title 1 designation from the Michigan State Board of Education. Steady gains continue in math scores and students are scoring well on the MEAP science questions. Springview is collaborating with parents as students, parents, and educators continue to work together to solve conflicts amicably.

Administrative Involvement

Members of the Springview staff achieve their school improvement goals in a variety of ways, according to Principal Kip Hogan. He admits that his staff is amused when he brings out a well-thumbed file, which holds the results of the school's Criterion Referenced Tests. The tests are broken down by individual student and by teacher. Hogan reviews the tests with each teacher. If a teacher has a group of low performing students in a specific subject, Hogan asks the teacher to observe another teacher who is producing better results. "If you are going to give a test, you should use the data for more than a grade," Hogan said.

Other assessments used include an on-demand writing test with a common prompt

for all grades, K-6. Not-for-grade math tests are given mid-year and at the end of the year to assess how students are doing.

Hogan works with each teacher to develop the teacher's Individual Development Plan (IDP). Many staff set individual three-year professional goals, which they anticipate to have an impact on student improvement. Hogan observes all non-tenured teachers twice a year and tenured teachers once a year.

Professional Development

The 2001-2002 school year was Lindy Beckman's first year at Springview and her third year of teaching. She is a special education teacher with a long-term career goal of moving into special education administration. Part of Lindy's three-year goal is to learn about specific disabilities, namely attention deficit disorder and Asperger's syndrome. Beckman is continuing her formal education and attends the annual Michigan Federated Chapters of the Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC) convention as part of her professional development goal. Beckman says that she has been successful in improving her classroom management skills and appreciates the encouragement she receives from her school administrators.

Cindy Buckel is a fifth-grade teacher who has taught for 23 years. Cindy has found that her personal and professional goals have come together at Springview. She moved from special education to a team teaching environment in a general education classroom.

Student Feedback

Flushing Community Schools personnel survey former students to identify areas in need of improvement. Students now in seventh and eighth grade indicated that they have no concerns with problem solving or assuming responsibility and that they did feel prepared to use technology at the junior high school.

Hogan credits the staff and supportive parents for Springview's successes. He is proud of the staff and proud that 94 percent of Springview's parents attended the last parent teacher conferences.

Camp Jump Start Gives Students a Boost toward Fall Classes

Shirley A. Beckman, Writer

Springview Elementary students get a “jump start” on reading and writing in July and August. That’s when Flushing Community Schools operate Camp Jump Start for students who have not mastered reading and writing skills appropriate to their grade level.

This year, camp sessions were held for two and a half hours, four days a week, July 22 through August 8. Last year, grant funding made it possible for a five-day a week program for four weeks.

The program, which has operated for nearly 30 years, rotates every two years among Flushing elementary buildings. This year, the camp was held at Springview, with Karen Ricketts, a former Jump Start teacher, serving as director.

Over 90 students who completed kindergarten or grades one through six were enrolled this summer. The focus was on literacy skills, reading, writing, listening, and speech.

Teachers use a computer lab to track each student’s progress in literacy and to teach math skills. Students take a pre-test the first day of camp and assessments continue throughout the session. “The computer does a pretty accurate job of recording the student’s progress,” Ricketts said. The class size is 15 students or fewer. In 2002, staff consisted of 10 teachers, two computer lab technicians, and a paraprofessional.

Matt Daniels, who ran the camp in 2001, explained that teachers often recommend students for camp at the end of the third quarter of the school year. Teachers suggest the camp to parents as a way to give their child “an extra boost” before the start of the school year. The cost to parents is \$25 per student.

Teachers are encouraged to make camp fun and to encourage creativity; students are encouraged to have fun and not focus on their deficits, Daniels said. “The mix of students from all Flushing Community Schools elementary schools helps.”

“Each teacher plans his/her work according to what the group is doing,” Ricketts said. At the conclusion of the camp, the Jump Start teacher prepares a narrative report about the student for the teacher he or she will have in the fall.

Springview has several school year programs that offer additional support and provide learning past regular school hours. The computer lab is open for 40 minutes before the start of the school day on Monday and Wednesday. A lab technician and a Title I aide focus on math and reading skills and assist with homework from the night before for students in grades four through six. The district provides transportation.

The computer lab is open from 3:30 until 4:15 p.m. for students in kindergarten through third grade. Students who walk to school use the lab on Monday and Wednesday, and bus riders can use the lab on Tuesday and Thursday. A lab technician and a paraprofessional assist with math and reading skills. The computer lab is also open one night a week from 7:00 until 8:00 p.m. All Title I students bring their parents to school four times a year to demonstrate what they can do on the computer.

Homework Help, a proctored study hall, is open three days a week from 3:30 until 4:15 p.m. A teacher’s aide is available and students are able to use the library computers for research. Springview also provides an after school program for working parents.



These Camp Jump Start students—who also attend Springview Elementary School in Flushing, Michigan—found a comfortable spot to brush up on their reading skills before school started in the fall.

Marquette’s Vandenboom Elementary School Emphasizes Literacy (continued from page 10...)

Somers, a 13-year teaching veteran, said. “We pull them out of the classroom in hopes of getting ahead of any reading problems they might have down the line.”

“What’s so exciting about the program is that it allows us to focus on the child one-on-one,” said Keough, who has been an aide for 15 years. “We hope that what we do with them is going to carry on when they go back into the classroom and they can apply the skills to what they are doing in the classroom.”

“We have heard nothing but positive comments from our classroom teachers, who can see the improvement in these students and will tell you, in their professional opinion, that they don’t think these students would have been able to be at that point if it wasn’t for the special one-on-one attention,” Somers added. “Most of the students

just needed an extra push to excel and that’s what we feel like we are doing—giving these selected students the extra push.”

Editor’s Note: Dr. Sandra Imdieke, Northern Michigan University School of Education, contributed information for this article.

For more information about this program, contact:

Pat Wittler
STARS Project Coordinator
 1201 South McClellan St.
 Marquette, MI 49855
 (906) 225-4295
 PWittler@mapsnet.org

Challenger Elementary Reaches Technology Goals Using the Futurekids Program

Annette Gorden, CEN Program Assistant



TITLE I SCHOOL

Challenger Elementary School

2475 52nd St. SE
Kentwood, MI 48508

(616) 689-2524
(616) 698-9089 fax
www.kentwoodps.org

Principal: Char Firlik

Grades K-5: 450 students
25% reduced lunch

Mission Statement

The staff of Challenger Elementary School, in partnership with students, parents and community, will create a stimulating, positive and safe environment ensuring mutual respect. We believe all children can learn essential affective and cognitive skills, enabling them to be responsible and productive contributors in a changing world.

In 1995, Challenger Elementary School, one of ten elementary schools located in the Kentwood School District just outside of Grand Rapids, partnered with Futurekids of Grand Rapids to implement a comprehensive technology program. Key elements of the plan include long-term assessment and planning, professional development, K-12 curriculum integration, plus on-going mentoring and support. After the first year of implementation, word traveled fast and local parent groups frequently inquired about when more schools would receive training.

"Futurekids was the best choice for us. The Futurekids focus is on critical thinking skills. High student achievement is apparent throughout Futurekids training and curriculum," Superintendent Mary Leiker said.

Challenger Elementary recently completed five years of implementing the Futurekids program starting with an extensive three-year training program for staff to implement the computer literacy program in grades K-5. The district and parent/teacher council supported the teachers' efforts with an up-to-date 30-station computer lab along with classroom computers. "The training has been critical to running the lab," Principal Char Firlik said.

Paraprofessional Support

Phyllis Bridges, a paraprofessional, serves as lab manager and assists teachers and students in the lab. She keeps machines and programs running, and provides technical support when needed. Three years ago, Phyllis started a student technology team for fourth- and fifth-graders. This team works on specific projects for the school and provides assistance in the lab. The lab manager receives training provided by the district in order to stay up to date on computer skills and technical ability. In addition, the teachers and lab manager have trained parent volunteers to assist in the lab. This is especially helpful for the K-3 classrooms. Parents are recruited at the beginning of the year as well as throughout the year as they express interest. Challenger strives to have at least one parent volunteer for each classroom. Currently, 15 parents provide assistance in the lab.



Challenger students develop confidence with computers after spending a minimum of one hour a week in the computer lab.

Plenty of Time on Computers

Students spend at least one hour per week in the computer lab. This leaves the lab open for an additional six hours per week and teachers can bid for additional time. Computer time is primarily used by the third-fourth- and fifth-graders. "Few districts offer computer lab time as part of the curriculum, with activities spelled out at each grade level," Principal Firlik said. "After working in the lab each year, students develop a high confidence level as they get ready to move into middle school."

Improved Scores

Since Kentwood implemented the Futurekids technology program the same year the state introduced the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) to evaluate student achievement, data exist to track the district's MEAP scores along with the progress of the technology training. From 1995 to 1999, the MEAP test results showed that student scores in fourth-grade math rose from 78 to 86 points. Seventh-grade MEAP reading scores improved no-

Continued on page 15...

Don't Wait—Collaborate!

Common Conversations about School Improvement Goals Take Place between Title I Service Providers and Quality Assurance Review (QAR) Pilot Teams

Kathy Bradford, Special Education Consultant, Quality Assurance, Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process builds its success upon the collaboration of all people in the education community who want to improve student performance within their respective school district. Title I teachers and administrators are most important in realizing this success.

The QAR process incorporates core teams representing school staff from general education and special education as well as administration and parents. Within the core team, Title I personnel are encouraged to collaborate with one another to expand the spectrum of the conversation about the school improvement process. This would include how students with disabilities access and succeed in the general education curriculum, how the goals are written to include improving the performance of students with disabilities, and the valid alignment of personnel development planning in an action plan based upon the results of the Quality Assurance Review Self-Assessment.

With the *No Child Left Behind* (Title I Reauthorization, 2002) legislation, Title I and special education services are closely aligned and focused on improving student performance. Collaborative conversations between these and all education service providers need to include the quality and quantity of student performance data collected, how the data are analyzed, and how the results of the analysis are used to inform instruction and improve student performance.

At various levels, the six QAR pilot schools have continued to collaborate with their respective Title I Consultant from the Office of Field Services and within their respective school districts. Through the core teams of each pilot, we now know that when a common conversation takes place between all of the service providers, common understandings develop. This process facilitates the basis for collaborative planning for school improvement goals and personnel development. It also unifies the focus for all service providers toward accessing the skills to improve the performance of all students within their school and district.

For more information, contact:
Kathy Bradford
Office of Special Education and
Early Intervention Services
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 335-0445
bradfordk@michigan.gov

Editor's Note: For reference to Title I and the role of the Office of Field Services in the QAR process, see "Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services Continues to Review Data from the Implementation of the QAR Process" on page 5.

Challenger Elementary Reaches Technology Goals Using the Futurekids Program (continued from page 14...)

ticeably too, moving from 50 to 55 points. The most dramatic results were in fourth-grade reading; scores soared from 59 to 71 points. It is also noteworthy to mention that the district's at-risk population more than doubled during this period of increased scores. "These figures show an obvious trend, which I attribute in large part to the technology program. Having been an educator for 31 years, I am aware of what triggers change in student learning. This technology program has absolutely been a catalyst for positive change in the Kentwood district. Without question, technology training is playing a key role in developing higher-order thinking skills and, therefore, high academic achievement in our students," Leiker said.

For more information about
Futurekids, contact:
www.futurekids.com or
(800) 765-8000



The Futurekids K-12 technology curriculum is built on a framework of over 400 learning outcomes in 10 technology areas. Challenger Elementary School students receive training in the Futurekids curriculum from their classroom teachers, who receive inservice training and continued assistance from a Futurekids facilitator.

Michigan Department of Education Issues \$32.5 Million for School Repairs and Infrastructure Improvements

T.J. Bucholz, Coordinator of Communications Outreach, Michigan Department of Education

More than \$32.5 million to assist school districts as they improve school infrastructure was recently issued to 107 Michigan school districts, according to the Michigan Department of Education.

The 2001-02 School Renovation, IDEA, and Technology Grant Program is a competitive, one-time, federal grant program designed to help local school districts make school repairs and renovations, and meet special education and renovation-related technology expenses.

"We're very pleased to announce these grants for school districts that desperately need infrastructure improvements. They underscore the critical importance of improving our neighborhood public schools," said Tom Watkins, Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction. "We have buildings in this state that are in desperate need of repair and improvements—some buildings don't just leak vertically, but they also leak horizontally. These grant dollars are a crucial first step toward enhancing all school facilities in our great state."

Michigan has been allocated \$43.89 million for this worthwhile program. The grants issued today represent all allocated Category 1—Urgent School Repairs funding for the program. The department will soon issue a second round of grants for the remainder of the funding that specifically addresses infrastructure activities related to the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) and technology improvement.

Although the Department of Education issued every dollar allocated by the federal government for the program, Michigan school districts requested more than \$68.2 million for this category. "We simply couldn't fund every request that we received, and almost every single grant application was worthy of funding," Watkins said. "Our resources to assist with these problems are finite, but we are absolutely committed to fighting for every grant dollar available to improve Michigan schools."

Approximately 47 percent of the funding, or \$15.31 million, was allocated to high-poverty local and intermediate school districts, and public school academies. "We ask the Legislature to provide more resources and bring school building repair priorities in this state on par with the emphasis they placed on sewer infrastructure a short time ago," Watkins said.

A complete list of schools that were funded is available online at www.michigan.gov/mde.

For more information, contact:
Office of the Superintendent
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 241-0494, fax 335-4565

New Financial Manager Appointed to Inkster Public Schools Under the Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act

Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins thanked Governor John Engler for his quick action in appointing a financial manager for the Inkster Public Schools. Watkins recommended three individuals for consideration as Inkster's financial manager. Engler appointed W. Howard Morris as financial manager, effective immediately on July 29, 2002.

"We are extremely pleased that the Governor moved very quickly to appoint Mr. Morris as the Inkster Schools financial manager before the start of the school year," Watkins said. "This move will ensure that the children of Inkster will have their education needs met when the school doors open for the year. We are very confident in Mr. Morris's ability to effectively manage the Inkster Public Schools."

In addition, Watkins has repeatedly asked Inkster Public Schools and Edison Schools, Inc. to submit plans for several areas over which he has concerns, including staff-to-student ratios, implementing a full curriculum for the students of Inkster, and safety of district educational facilities.

Watkins said he laments having to invoke Public Act 72—the *Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act*—in Inkster Schools, but simply had no other alternative. "Unfortunately, P.A. 72 is the only tool available to the state of Michigan that addresses the serious and distressing issues facing the Inkster Public Schools," Watkins said. "Focus for this entire issue should not be on adults—but on what is best for the children of Inkster."

Chronology Leading to Invoking P.A. 72

February 27, 2002 – Watkins appoints joint fact-finding team in conjunction with Dr. Marlene Davis, Superintendent of Wayne Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) to address several outstanding issues in the Inkster Public Schools.

March 28, 2002 – Michigan Department of Education and Wayne RESA issue joint fact finding team report regarding the state of Inkster Public Schools.

April 22, 2002 – Watkins holds public forum in Inkster School District to listen to more than 600 concerned community residents.

May 16, 2002 – Watkins issues letter to Engler declaring a "serious financial problem" in Inkster Public Schools.

June 13, 2002 – Engler appoints five member fact-finding team as per P.A. 72 statute.

July 18, 2002 – Gubernatorial fact-finding team holds public hearing requested by Inkster Board of Education in Lansing.

July 29, 2002 – Watkins issues letter to Engler urging appointment of financial manager.

August 8, 2002 – Engler names W. Howard Morris as financial manager for the Inkster Public Schools.

For more information, contact: Office of the Superintendent
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 241-0494, fax 335-4565

Events by Date

Editor's Note: Upcoming Events are uploaded regularly to the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services section of the Michigan government Web site. You can access events information at www.michigan.gov/mde or the Michigan State Improvement Grant (SIG) Web site at www.michigansig.org. You can submit events to these Web sites yourself or continue to submit them to Newsline. Events should be submitted two months prior to Newsline publication.

OCTOBER 1–17, 2002

Phonics First™ Orton–Gillingham

Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Mercy Center; Farmington Hills, MI
☛ Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

OCTOBER 4, 2002

15th Annual Exceptional Children's Week Poster Contest

Sponsor: Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Michigan Chapter
☛ Contact: Anna Silverstein, asilver225@aol.com
(248) 853-9991

OCTOBER 4, 2002

The 3rd Annual Michael Golds Memorial Conference

Sponsor: Children & Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Location: Oakland Community College; Farmington Hills, MI
☛ Contact: Kenneth Smith, OCT4ADHDconf@aol.com
(810) 220-9060

OCTOBER 5, 2002

Teaching to Leave No Child Behind from Decoding to Literature

Sponsor: Erickson Learning Center
Location: Weber's Inn; Ann Arbor, MI
☛ Contact: Mary, www.idamib.org
(734) 459-6026

OCTOBER 6–7, 2002

Weekend Seminar

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
Location: Sheraton Hotel; Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Larry Campbell, LLCampbe@remc12.k12.mi.us
(616) 244-5387

OCTOBER 8–9, 2002

Professional Development and General Membership Meeting

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
Location: Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Larry Campbell, LLCampbe@remc12.k12.mi.us
(616) 244-5387

OCTOBER 11, 2002

Autism Society of Michigan Fall Conference 2002

Sponsor: Autism Society of Michigan
Location: Holiday Inn Southfield; Southfield, MI
☛ Contact: Autism Society of Michigan
(517) 882-2800

OCTOBER 13–19, 2002

Investing in Ability Week

Sponsor: Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, Family Independence Agency
☛ Contact: Margaret Heiser, heiserm2@michigan.gov
(877) 499-6232

OCTOBER 15, 2002

Strategies for Dealing with Academic Diversity in the Middle School (Part 2) Webcast

Sponsor: National Middle School Association (NMSA)
☛ Contact: NMSA, www.nmsa.org
(800) 728-0032

OCTOBER 15, 2002

There are No IEPs in College

Sponsors: US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and Transition
Services Project
Location: Applied Technology Center; Grand Rapids, MI
☛ Contact: Maria Schluendorn
(216) 522-2687

OCTOBER 17–19, 2002

MALDE 29th Fall Conference—Effective Practices: The Best of What We Know

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Learning Disabilities Educators (MALDE)
Location: Holiday Inn West; Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Edwina Borovich, Edwina.Borovich@Oakland.k12.mi.us
(248) 209-2339

OCTOBER 17–19, 2002

Superintendent Preparation Series (SUPES) Academy

Sponsor: The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM)
Location: Crowne Plaza; Grand Rapids, MI
☛ Contact: MIEM
(517) 327-2589

OCTOBER 18, 2002

2002 MI-Access Coordinator/Facilitator Conference

Sponsors: The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM) and Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
Location: Kellogg Center; East Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: MIEM
(517) 327-2589

OCTOBER 19, 26 & NOVEMBER 9, 2002

Advanced Phonics First™

Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Bloomfield Hills, MI
☛ Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

OCTOBER 24, 2002

2002 MI-Access Coordinator/Facilitator Conference

Sponsors: The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM) and Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
Location: Crowne Plaza; Grand Rapids, MI
☛ Contact: MIEM
(517) 327-2589

OCTOBER 24, 2002

School Violence Issues in Michigan: Protecting our Schools

Sponsor: Lorman Education Services
Location: Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Lorman Education Services, www.lorman.com
(715) 833-3940

OCTOBER 25, 2002

3rd Annual Conference on Inclusive Education: Together are Better

Sponsor: West Michigan Inclusion Network
Location: Grand Valley State University; Grand Rapids, MI
☛ Contact: Lauri Sterin, wmichinclusion@aol.com
(616) 954-9424

OCTOBER 31, 2002

2002 MI-Access Coordinator/Facilitator Conference

Sponsors: The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM) and Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
Location: Holiday Inn; Livonia, MI
☛ Contact: MIEM
(517) 327-2589

NOVEMBER 2, 2002

Speed Reading

Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Bloomfield Hills, MI
☛ Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

Events by Date

NOVEMBER 4, 2002

No Child Left Behind Conference

Sponsor: LaPointe and Associates
Location: Sheraton Hotel; Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Marge Joslen, www.spedlaw.com
(517) 349-4121

NOVEMBER 4, 2002

Positive Behavior Support Awareness Workshop

Sponsor: Washtenaw ISD
Location: Ann Arbor, MI
☛ Contact: Gretchen Derr-Mullins
(734) 994-8100 ext. 1273

NOVEMBER 7, 2002

2002 MI-Access Coordinator/Facilitator Conference

Sponsors: The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM) and Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
Location: TreeTops; Gaylord, MI
☛ Contact: MIEM
(517) 327-2589

NOVEMBER 7–10, 2002

Annual Fall Leadership Conference

Sponsor: Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB)
Location: Dearborn Hyatt; Dearborn, MI
☛ Contact: Tricia Byerly
(800) 968-4627 ext. 238

NOVEMBER 9–10, 2002

Weekend Seminar

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
Location: Sheraton Hotel; Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Larry Campbell, LLCampbe@remc12.k12.mi.us
(616) 244-5387

NOVEMBER 10–12, 2002

2002 Annual Conference—“Past, Present, and Beyond...1962–2002”

Sponsor: Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) of Michigan
Location: Kellogg Conference Center; East Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: LDA of Michigan, ldami@aol.com
(888) 597-7809

NOVEMBER 12, 2002

There are No IEPs in College

Sponsors: US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and Transition Services Project
Location: University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, MI
☛ Contact: Maria Schloendorn
(216) 522-2687

NOVEMBER 14–15, 2002

Positive Behavior Support for Young Children Team Training

Sponsor: Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH)
Location: Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Aimee Cain, acain@eaton.k12.mi.us
(800) 593-9146 ext. 9

NOVEMBER 14–15, 2002

16th Annual Support Staff Conference

Sponsor: The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM)
Location: Amway Grand Plaza; Grand Rapids, MI
☛ Contact: MIEM
(517) 327-2589

NOVEMBER 14–16, 2002

Superintendent Preparaton Series (SUPES) Academy

Sponsor: The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM)
Location: Sheraton Hotel; Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: MIEM
(517) 327-2589

NOVEMBER 16, 2002

Orton-Gillingham Refresher

Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Bloomfield Hills, MI
☛ Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

NOVEMBER 16–17, 2002

Weekend Seminar

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
Location: Sheraton Hotel; Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Larry Campbell
(616) 244-5387, LLCampbe@remc12.k12.mi.us

NOVEMBER 18, 2002

504 Conference

Sponsor: LaPointe and Associates
Location: Sheraton Hotel; Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Marge Joslin
(517) 349-4121

NOVEMBER 19, 2002

Exploring Curriculum Integration Webcast

Sponsor: National Middle School Association (NMSA)
☛ Contact: NMSA, www.nmsa.org
(800) 728-0032

NOVEMBER 21–22, 2002

12th Annual Technology Conference and Exposition

Sponsor: The Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM)
Location: Amway Grand Plaza; Grand Rapids, MI
☛ Contact: MIEM
(517) 327-2589

DECEMBER 5–7, 2002

Michigan Education Association Instruction and Professional Development Conference

Sponsor: Michigan Education Association (MEA)
Location: Hyatt Regency Hotel; Dearborn, MI
☛ Contact: Joy Stack, jstack@mea.org
(800) 292-1934 ext. 4030

DECEMBER 10 & 11, 2002

Professional Development and General Membership Meeting

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
Location: Lansing, MI
☛ Contact: Larry Campbell, LLCampbe@remc12.k12.mi.us
(616) 244-5387

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- ☐ SEAC Member
- ☐ SICCC Member
- ☐ Site Manager
- ☐ State Board of Education Member
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- ☐ Early On® Coordinator
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- ☐ IHE Committee Member
- ☐ LEA Center Program Contact
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- ☐ K-12
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224 S. Cochran Ave.
Charlotte, MI 48813

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(517) 321-6101 #20,
(517) 541-1351 fax

rwolever@eaton.k12.mi.us



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Analyzing Assessment Results Leads to Early Math Success at Townsend Elementary

Holly Spence Sasso, Editor

Five students go to a party. Each child receives a goody bag with 11 sports pins in it. What is the total number of sports pins that all five children receive? This is the question posed to four second-grade students in Kathy Higgs's classroom at Townsend Elementary School in Vandercook Lake, Michigan. All four students answered the problem correctly, but each took a different route in finding the answer. Using Unifix® cubes, the four students enthusiastically set about solving the problem individually, and without much hesitation or concern about using a consistent approach.

Kelsey diagramed her manipulative model on her paper with a number sentence that read $50 + 5 = 55$. Kaylene's

diagram was different, but her number sentence was the same. Nate diagramed five stacks of 11 blocks and wrote $11 \times 5 = 55$, and Nathan did a similar diagram but wrote his sentence $11 + 11 + 11 + 11 + 11 = 55$.

"I know more about my students' math abilities now and I'm able to structure instruction to their individual needs," said Higgs about a new math program the school has adopted called Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI).

Believing that students in special education will gain from curriculum strategies designed to improve the success of *ALL* students, Townsend Elementary is in its second year as a QAR pilot school site. Townsend staff has developed the skills to disaggregate student performance assessment data through the QAR process. Recognizing the importance of using these data to inform instruction and to improve the performance of *ALL* students, Townsend has focused on training additional teachers in CGI assessment-driven curriculum.

"CGI stresses that assessment is integral to instruction and also that students progress through stages of math development differently," Higgs said. "Because I know more about my students' abilities, I am able to teach to individual needs. Students learn the problem strategies that work best for them. Students encourage one another. Higher level thinkers are able to try adult skills and lower level thinkers can remain within their comfort zone."

"The CGI training and using the program with students have taught me that students

Continued on page 19...



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR) SCHOOL

**Townsend Elementary
School**
1005 Floyd Ave.
Vandercook Lake, MI 49203
(517) 784-6133
(517) 788-3695 fax
scnc.vandy.k12.mi.us

Principal: Paul Chilcote

Grades 5-6: 678 students
32% reduced
lunch



Nate, Nathan, Kaylene, and Kelsey (above from left to right) listen to their teacher, Kathy Higgs, as she prepares them to solve a math problem using strategies derived from the Cognitively Guided Instruction model in which teachers at Townsend Elementary School have been trained.

Mission Statement

The purpose of school improvement is to improve outcomes (academic, social, physical, etc.) for all students in the school. Our staff was represented on the district School Improvement Team, which has been involved in the improvement process since 1989. Through the training of the District Team, the Building Improvement Team was established and continues to address school improvement issues. School improvement is not an event but is a never ending process.

Data Drive School Improvement at Navigator Middle School

Holly Spence Sasso, Editor



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR) SCHOOL

Navigator Middle School
2150 E. M-36
Pinckney, MI 48169
(810) 225-5300
(810) 225-5305 fax
www.pcs.k12.mi.us

Principal: Stacey Urbin

Grades 5-6: 787 students
6% reduced lunch

Navigator School Improvement Goals

- 1) Our students will demonstrate improvement in writing in all curricular areas.
- 2) Our school community will work together to create a positive, cohesive climate.
- 3) Our students will demonstrate improvement in reading and comprehending informational selections in all curricular areas.

Navigator School in Pinkney, Michigan is committed to creating a positive, cohesive climate where students in special education programs are not isolated from the general education environment or curriculum. Part of the Pinckney Community Schools, Navigator serves students in fifth and sixth grade. Stacy Urbin is the principal.

"School improvement goals at Navigator are written to include all students, regardless of ability," Urbin said. "We strive to make sure that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum. Four years ago, when a team of special educators and parents developed our program, the goal was to provide more access to the general education curriculum than ever before. We developed a co-taught inclusive model for most students. Some students were pulled out for basic instruction in math and language arts, but they were included for everything else, with accommodations used whenever necessary."

"Our involvement in the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process has helped us to take our vision and head in the right direction," Urbin said. "Without the QAR, we were teetering on the edge and unable to take the steps needed to achieve our school improvement goals." (See "Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services Continues to Review Data from the Implementation of the QAR Process" on page 5.)

Data collection is an important aspect of the QAR process, and Navigator uses the QAR Self-Assessment Survey of teachers to assist in bringing all staff "on-board." The QAR Self-Assessment Survey prompted teachers to proactively think about their teaching skills.

"Collecting data on student performance is essential to quality instruction," Urbin said. "In the fall and spring, all Navigator



Principal Stacy Urbin takes a few minutes to greet Trent, a student at Navigator Middle School.

students are assessed in writing, using a curriculum based writing rubric. Teachers and students analyze the results of the assessment and set goals for instruction."

The School Curriculum Improvement Team (SCIT) at Navigator developed a writing project to assist in achieving its school improvement goal for improved writing across the curriculum. "We find that the writing struggles our students face are similar for students in special education and general education," said Donna Leszcz, sixth-grade language arts and social studies teacher and school improvement co-chair. "We often match students who are struggling with peer editors who might offer assistance."

According to Leszcz, the Navigator writing project provides teachers with a six-point rubric that is closely aligned with the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) grading instrument. Teachers put an emphasis on planning in the writing process because this is an area where early assessment showed that students needed more work. "Instruction emphasis in the areas of style and voice has resulted in improved test scores in these areas," Leszcz said. "We are also noticing that, across the curriculum, even in math and science, teachers are less hesitant to give writing assignments."

"We have spent time and money on professional development for both special education and general education staff," Urbin said. "We work as a team and, during the summer of 2002, several special educators and their general education teammates reviewed the general education curriculum and identified the specific skills students require that are embedded within the curriculum. By doing this, they will more easily be able to write individualized education



Special education teacher Alicia Parsons reviews an assessment binder on one of her students.

Continued on page 19...

Nominations Are Being Accepted for the Murray O. Batten Award

The Michigan Association of Intermediate Special Education Administrators (MAISEA) is accepting nominations for the 2002-03 Murray O. Batten Award. The award is named in honor of the late Murray O. Batten, who was the state director of special education from 1973-81. The award is given to practicing special education administrators who emulate the qualities of honesty, integrity, trust, and compassion.

The award will be announced and presented at a special ceremony during MAISEA's December 2002 meeting. Nomination letters should include examples of: leadership experience, personal and professional ethics, humanism and caring, and accomplishments. Nominations are considered by the Murray O. Batten Award Committee, which includes the MAISEA past-president and president-elect, the previous year's award recipient, a member of the Batten family, and three additional MAISEA members. The deadline for submitting nominations is Friday October 26, 2002.

For more information, contact:
Cindy Shinsky, Calhoun ISD
 17111 G Drive North
 Marshall, MI 49068

Analyzing Assessment Results Leads Townsend Students to Early Math Success (continued from page 17...)

have a natural sophistication toward problem solving skills and some of the work sheets we traditionally give them tend to squelch those abilities," Higgins said. "The CGI program allows students to spend more time verbalizing about math and working through problems in groups."

CGI is not a traditional primary school mathematics program and it does not prescribe instruction, according to D.L. Chambers who has written about 20 years of research on this program, originating from the University of Wisconsin. CGI classrooms exhibit certain characteristics. Students spend more time problem solving and reporting on their findings, teachers and peers listen and question until they understand the problem solutions, and based on their observations, teachers make decisions about what each child knows and how instruction should be structured to enable the student to learn.

All teachers at Townsend receive training from Higgins and another teacher, Sheryl Waite, who also received CGI training in Wisconsin. "Based on our pre- and post-test data, we're seeing large improvements in math performance. We are just beginning to collect data about improvements in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) scores. Based on our knowledge of the tests, it seems that math testing could be adjusted to include more problem solving skills," Higgins concluded.

For more information about CGI, contact:
www.wcer.wisc.edu/ccv

Data Drive School Improvement at Navigator Middle School (continued from page 18...)

program (IEP) goals that are based on the skills required within the general education curriculum.

Collaboration between general and special education teachers is a key component of Navigator's school improvement plan, according to Urbin. "Our general education teachers are beginning to take an interest in many of the practices being used in special education," Urbin said. One example is use of assessment binders. General education teachers are noticing that the use of assessment binders for all their students might be an effective way to monitor student achievement more closely.

Alicia Parsons, a special education teacher at Navigator who also serves as the QAR chairperson and a special education department chair, uses assessment binders with all of her students in special education. Each student has a binder with six tabs containing the following information:

- student profile
- progress toward IEP goals
- math work samples
- language arts work samples
- parent input
- IEP paperwork

"The binders are an effective way to keep things organized, but they also give easy access to understanding a student's present level of performance," Parsons said.

Title I Services Are Delivered Using the Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance Model (continued from page 7...)

of students, the Title I legislation requires that the school address those needs. Schoolwide assistance schools have more flexibility than targeted assistance schools to consolidate federal program dollars in an effort to achieve a total school reform of its educational program.

Schools below the 40 percent poverty level must choose the targeted assistance model. Schools that have 40 percent or more students within the qualifying level may choose either model.

For more information, contact:
Jane Jacobs
 Michigan Department of Education
 Office of Field Services
 P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
 (517) 241-1162
jacobsj@michigan.gov

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Defines “Access to the General Curriculum”

Ginny Palubin, Teacher Consultant, East Detroit Schools Michigan Federation of Teachers and School Related Personnel Representative, State Improvement Plan (SIP) Committee Co-Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) 2001-2002; Shari Krishnan, Parent Member-at-Large, SIP Committee Co-Chair, SEAC 2001-2002; and Sandi Laham, Consultant, Laham Associates, Facilitator, SIP Committee, SEAC 2001-2002

The last issue of *CEN Newsline* introduced readers to the context and issues surrounding the complexities of the Special Education Advisory Committee’s dialogue regarding “Access to the General Curriculum.” We described what triggered the intensive dialogue, how the committee conducted its business, and questions that needed to be addressed in the SEAC SIP Committee’s year-end 2001-2002 report. This month, we share the final outcomes from the SEAC SIP Committee’s recent conversations about “Access to the General Curriculum.”

Defining Access to the General Curriculum

Reaching consensus regarding what access to the general curriculum meant to the SIP Committee took a great deal of time. The committee realized that this refined definition would be the most important outcome from our committee’s work this year. The significance of this definition was recently underscored by the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), also known as the *No Child Left Behind Act*. It was our intent to thoughtfully define what access to the general curriculum meant in Michigan in order to guarantee that *no child is left out!* The SIP Committee defined its vision of “Access to the General Curriculum” as follows:

Access to the general curriculum occurs when all students participate and make progress in the general curriculum with necessary supports.

The SIP Committee members agreed that *ALL students*, including those children identified as eligible for special education programs and services, should engage in challenging and purposeful learning. Access to the general curriculum would certainly help students do exactly that!

The General Curriculum and Necessary Supports

The *Michigan Curriculum Framework* was a key resource when the SIP Committee looked at the issue of access to the general curriculum. The framework articulates a vision for all students, including those students with disabilities, and describes what students should know and be able to do. The framework states that:

Michigan’s K-12 education will ensure that all students will develop their potential in order to lead productive and satisfying lives. All students will engage in challenging and purposeful learning that blends their experiences with content knowledge and real-world applications in preparation for their adult roles, which include becoming:

- *Literate individuals*
- *Healthy and fit people*

- *Responsible family members*
- *Productive workers*
- *Involved citizens*
- *Self-directed, lifelong learners*

In the context of the SIP Committee’s work, general curriculum means “the local board approved curriculum.” The curriculum is the content that teachers teach and that students are expected to learn. Curriculum includes the information and skills that are assessed and measured at the end of the education process. Supports are cited as necessary when they are needed to help students gain access to and succeed in their involvement with the general curriculum. Necessary supports include accommodations and modifications. A reference used to help the SIP Committee to more clearly understand differences between accommodations and modifications is *Accessing the General Curriculum: Including Students with Disabilities in Standards-Based Reform*, by Victor Nolet and Margaret J. McLaughlin, published by Corwin Press, California (order at corwinpress.com).

Discussions pertaining to accommodations and modifications for diverse student populations to gain access to the general curriculum led the committee to examine possible models for describing what such access might look like. The committee examined four conceptual models: general curriculum with no accommodations or modifications; general curriculum with accommodations; general curriculum with modifications; and different or alternate curriculums. At this stage in the on going dialogue, the committee dismissed the notion that access to the general curriculum was location dependent. Involvement with the general curriculum became the central focus.

Challenges to Achieving Access to the General Curriculum and Desired Outcomes

The SIP Committee began to question why some students had access to the general curriculum, while others did not. Common themes emerged. Examples of thematic challenges that prevent some students (identified as eligible for special education programs and services) from having involvement with and making progress in the general curriculum included:

- General education and special education systems and personnel do not always share common curriculum goals and objectives.
- There still exists a lack of understanding and negative attitudes toward students with disabilities.
- Personnel development on helping students gain access to the general curriculum is inadequate.
- High stakes outcome accountability systems, focusing mostly on schools needing to improve test scores, make it more difficult for some students to be openly invited to be optimally involved with the general curriculum.

Continued on page 21...

Around Michigan

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Defines "Access to the General Curriculum" (cont. from page 20)

- There is a lack of research-based "access to the general curriculum" best practice models to look toward for guidance.
- Adequate resources to ensure that all students have access to the general curriculum are not readily available.
- The present political climate does not optimally support having all students gain access to the general curriculum.

After examining these challenges, the committee formed a list of realistic "desired outcomes" that would usher in systems to support the true spirit of access to the general curriculum. Thus, it would be helpful to have:

- All educational personnel with working knowledge of common curriculum goals and objectives
- Schools and school personnel who support and nurture a hearty respect for learner diversity
- Focused and sustained personnel development on access to the general curriculum available at the local level
- Demonstration and/or model schools that successfully provide access to the general curriculum for all students and have outcome accountability, as measured on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)
- Identification of best practice models to serve as realistic examples and expectations of access to the general curriculum
- Identification of ways that support access to the general curriculum at the classroom level that are cost efficient, once fully implemented at the district level
- Key alliances with stakeholder groups to influence public awareness and the political climate surrounding issues pertaining to access

Opportunities for Success

The SIP Committee members noted opportunities within the present education system that would help in the achievement of our goal to create schools where all students are making progress in the general curriculum. Identifying and utilizing links with these opportunities could help move state schools toward the desired outcomes, outlined above, as well. It would be prudent for school administration officials to strategically align with the following suggestions:

- Capitalize on ESEA and assessment requirements for all students.
- Advocate for high expectations and standards for all students.
- Support disability-friendly leaders within the present system in their efforts to lead, promote, and communicate about the importance of education for all students.
- Build awareness of the issues surrounding access to the general curriculum. Link efforts with those of the ILIAD/ASPIRE National Resource Cadre.
- Look at the existing publications (i.e. organizational newsletters) as a vehicle to share information about access to the general curriculum. Consider preparing a press release or series of articles about this topic.
- Use *Newsline* as a vehicle to disseminate information about access to the general curriculum.
- Consider how technology can be used to exchange information.

- Use MI-Access-Level II (functional skills) as a means to explain access.
- Align access to the general curriculum training with the new administrative rules training.

What Next?

A SIP Committee report with the definition of access to the general curriculum and the committee's recommendations was submitted for consideration to the SEAC members and Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (MDE, OSE/EIS) at the June 2002 SEAC meeting. The report will be forwarded to the State Board of Education as part of the SEAC year-end report.

Defining access to the general curriculum was the easy part of the SEAC SIP Committee's work. Taking action to move access to the general curriculum from concept to reality requires time, energy, and determination by all stakeholders. Some of us, as individuals and in our own way, have already started spreading the word about the importance of access to the general curriculum. We hope that *Newsline* readers will help us move this agenda forward, since it is a giant step worth taking for the benefit of all students.

For more information, contact:

Shari Krishnan
(248) 852-2891

sharikrish@aol.com

SEAC SIP Committee Members 2001-2002

Kathleen Clegg	Member-At-Large	Lapeer
Nancy Jackson	MI Association for Children with Emotional Disorders	Lincoln Park
Jill Jacobs	MI Association of Nonpublic Schools	Lansing
Kim Kaster	Arc Michigan	Saline
Shari Krishnan	Member-At-Large	Bloomfield Hills
Paul Kubicek	MI Association of Teachers of Emotionally Disturbed Children	Grand Haven
Mark Larson	Institutes of Higher Education/Ex-officio	Detroit
Pam Mish	MI Association of Administrators of Special Education	Ann Arbor
Ginny Palubin	MI Federation of Teachers and School Related Personnel	Sterling Heights
Debs Roush	Member-At-Large	Ann Arbor
Deb Russell	MI Association of School Boards	Kalamazoo
Larry Simpson	Member-At-Large	Flint
Don Trap	MI Association of Intermediate Special Education Administrators	Corunna
Laurie Vanderploeg	MI Council for Exceptional Children	Ada
Randy VanGasse	MI Association of School Administrators	Norway

Shari Krishnan and Ginny Palubin served as chairs for the committee.

Jacquelyn Thompson, Director of the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, served as an ex-officio member of the committee. Fran Loose served as a staff liaison from the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services. Sandi Laham facilitated the activities of the committee.

Taking Positive Behavior Support “Up to Scale”

Positive Behavior Support Goes Countywide in Genesee ISD

Bernard Travnikar, Consultant, Great Lakes Positive Behavior Support Network

Early in the 2001-2002 school year, local special education directors in the Genesee Intermediate School District (ISD) made a significant and unprecedented decision regarding the expenditure of their capacity building grant funds. All 21 local directors elected to pool all of the capacity building dollars received by their districts to address their number one shared concern: student discipline! Analysis of surveys conducted at the close of the previous school year indicated that behavior of students was at the top of the list of problems in need of serious attention. Insightfully, Dan Klimaszewski, director of Special Education in Swartz Creek, noted, “We’re all concerned about low graduation rates, especially in special education, but all too often, our over-reliance on punitive approaches actually exacerbates the problem of school drop out.”

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is currently being implemented in a number of ISDs and local school districts in Michigan. Charlevoix-Emmet, Delta-Schoolcraft, Hillsdale, Holland, Kalamazoo, Lapeer, Lenawee, Macomb, Manistee, Marquette-Alger, Monroe, Muskegon, Oakland, St. Clair, and Wayne are some of the “early adopters.” However, Genesee ISD remains unique in its level of consensus and collaboration. The willingness and ability of the local directors in Genesee to pool resources and work together toward the accomplishment of shared goals makes sustainable change an attainable goal.

Area principals are enthusiastic about the prospect of research-based change of practice, as well. Kevin Klaeren, principal at Swartz Creek Middle School, has expressed his own enthusiasm, stating, “PBS is the complete package for our current professional development needs, as it brings learning communities, equity, and quality teaching to the forefront. Responding to the latest research and building-level student performance data, our teachers will be poised to make a greater and more positive impact on all of our students.”

In the first four months of 2002, PBS trainers conducted 14 two-day training sessions. Over 300 parents, teachers, ancillary staff members, and administrators participated in teams representing each of the 21 local districts and all of the nine public school academies. Sessions addressed topics that included the rationale for a change of practice, relevant legal mandates, functional assessment and positive support plan development for individual students, as well as schoolwide implementation strategies. Pre- and post-evaluation of participants’ perceptions regarding their own knowledge and understanding of PBS strategies and practices revealed significant positive changes (see figure 1, page 23).

What is more important, however, is that evaluation that occurred two months after training took place confirmed that real change of practice is occurring throughout the county. According to Mark Wingblad, director of Student Support Services in the Carman-Ainsworth Community Schools, “Prosocial skills are actively being taught and learned, while punitive approaches continue to decrease.” Wingblad’s perception is supported by the data gathered by Dr. Susan Lentz, who is providing extensive support in the area of PBS project evaluation. Dr. Lentz notes that, “Follow-up survey

results demonstrated that two months after participating in the workshop, participant skill levels had not decreased in any of the specified outcome areas. When collegial discourse occurred in the form of discussion with other faculty members, learning increased.”

A copy of Dr. Lentz’s 20-page summary evaluation of the first year of implementation, or the briefer executive summary, can be obtained by contacting me at bernardtravnikar@aol.com.



Bernard Travnikar, Ph.D.

In the coming school year, a number of schools within Genesee ISD will be using an adapted participant survey initially developed by Dr. Rob Horner and his colleagues at the Center for Positive Behavior Intervention and Support in Eugene, Oregon. In the true spirit of PBS, the scoring of these surveys will be facilitated through the cooperation of Macomb ISD. Dr. Mike Nolan, the behavioral consultant at Macomb, worked with technical support staff at his ISD to develop software that allows survey results to be generated through the use of optical scanners. In like fashion, the survey adaptations developed in Genesee will be shared with Nolan’s team in Macomb.

Results of the Genesee initiative, to date, have been better than hoped for initially. Gerald Nester, Monitoring and Compliance Officer at Genesee ISD, has stated, “We’re already where we hoped to be a year from now.” To assure that momentum will not be lost now that initial awareness training is firmly in place, three PBS consultant positions have been developed at the ISD to implement support on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, plans are in place to create a virtual community of PBS support providers. Both parents and professionals will be recruited to receive in-depth training, allowing them to provide support within and across local district boundaries.

Some of the key players in the Genesee initiative plan to provide a presentation at the March 2003 Michigan Federated Chapters of the Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC) convention in Grand Rapids to further update the state regarding the Genesee ISD’s genuine capacity building in the area of countywide PBS implementation.

**For more information, contact:
Bernard Travnikar, Ph.D.
bernardtravnikar@aol.com**

Data Show Results of the Positive Behavior Support Grant Project Evaluation in Genesee Intermediate School District

Susan A. Lentz, Ph.D., Evaluation Consultant

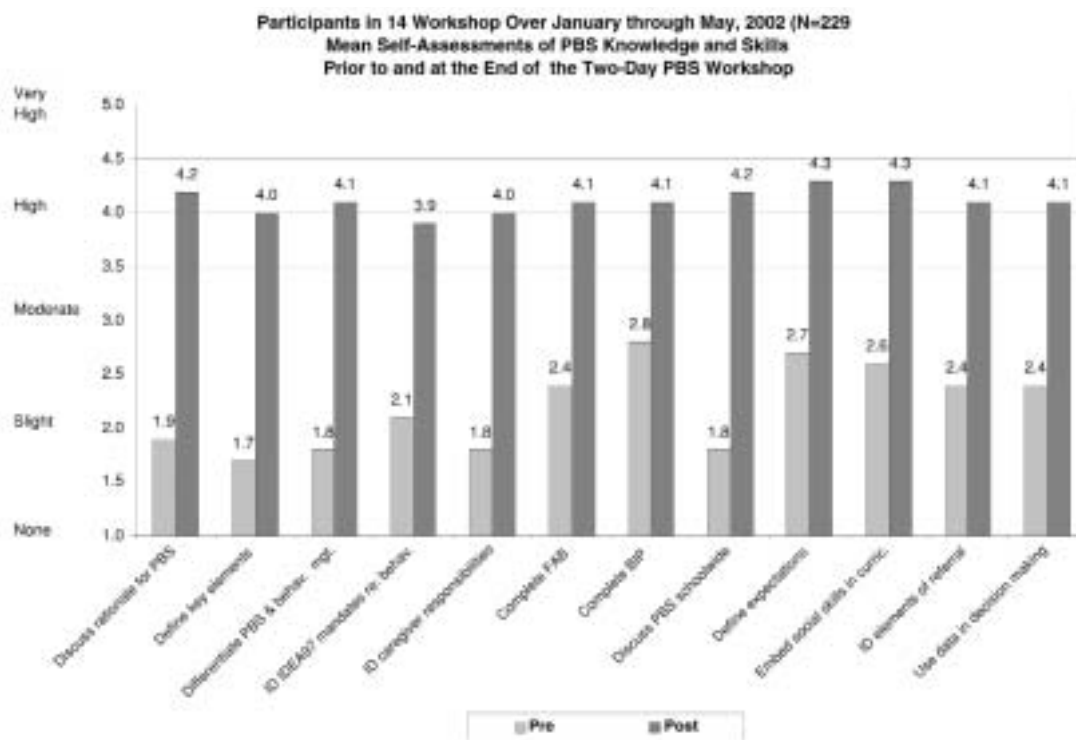


figure 1

Newsline Is Honored with an Award for Excellence

Lori Schulze, Communication Specialist

The Center for Educational Networking (CEN) has been awarded the APEX 2002 Award of Excellence in the most improved newsletter category for its work on *Newsline*, a publication dedicated to special education issues.

APEX 2002—the 14th Annual Awards for Publication Excellence—is an international competition that recognizes outstanding publications from newsletters and magazines to annual reports, brochures, and Web sites.

According to the APEX 2002 judges, “The awards were based on excellence in graphic design, quality of editorial content, and the success of the entry in conveying the message and achieving overall communications effectiveness.”

Newsline, in production since 1993, is published five times a year by CEN. Each edition of this newsletter focuses on a single topic related to improving the performance of students with disabilities.

The newsletter is designed by Deb Richardson of Trillium Graphic Design and is printed by Millbrook Printing Company. Subscribe to *Newsline* online at www.michigansig.org or www.michigan.gov/mde or complete the subscription form on the insert of this publication.





Clarifying the Special Education Process May Help Participants Avoid Confusion and Conflict

Ron Greiner, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

Editor's Note: This is the third column on Dispute Resolution offered by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS). This column will appear regularly in Newsline. The OSE/EIS is providing information in this feature with a reminder that each due process hearing decision and each complaint investigation decision is based solely on factual circumstances, as presented in individual cases. Specific cases presented here should not be the basis of generalizations about dispute resolution. The OSE/EIS received several comments on the feature that appeared in the last issue and appreciates the perspectives that were shared.

This column focuses on potential areas of confusion within the special education process and how to avoid situations that could lead to conflict.

Consent, Written Notice, and Procedural Safeguards: When They Must Be Provided

Several intermediate school district (ISD) and Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) investigation reports have addressed complaints related to "parental consent," "written notice," and "procedural safeguards notice." During the investigations of these complaints, it became clear that some parents and school districts were confused about the precise meaning of these terms. School districts are confused about the occasions when parental consent, written notice, and procedural safeguard notice are required by the district. Parents are confused about when they must provide parental consent and when they have a right to receive written notice and procedural safeguard notice.

Generally, disagreements and confusion in these complaints (about parental consent, written notice), and procedural safeguard notice comes down to four specific questions: 1. What is parent consent and when must a district obtain parent consent in writing? 2. What is written notice and when must the district provide a parent with such notice? 3. How do procedural safeguards and parent rights relate to written notice? 4. What information must be included when the parent receives written notice? Hopefully, this article makes these processes and requirements clear and understandable.

Examples of Ambiguity, or—Why You're Not the Only One Who's Confused

The ambiguity and confusion that surround these terms comes, somewhat, from the regulations themselves. The actual terms used in the regulations include: procedural safeguards, written notice, and parental consent, which are not immediately clear on a first reading. The terms are very technical. In addition, the regulations use similar words to describe different processes. For references to examples where the terms "notice," "notified," and "notification" may be confusing within the regulations, see the footnote at the end of this article.

Background on the Confusion, or—Why It's Nobody's Fault

Before trying to understand what specific terms mean, it may be helpful to clarify some basic perspectives within the laws and regulations that the special education system is built upon. Within the

special education legal system there are basically two important parties: the family and the district. Based on parents' advocacy, legislators have assumed the parents' perspective—namely, that parents of students with special needs know their children best, and school personnel generally do not know them as well. Legislators, knowing that there is a child involved, wanted to establish and maintain a level playing field between parents and school districts. Leveling the playing field required assigning specific rights (including empowerment) to parents and specific responsibilities (including power) to districts.

To legislators, a system that involves power, rights, and responsibilities, must anticipate disagreement and conflict, and must provide processes to resolve conflict. And many of the regulations are designed to identify specific processes to address situations when there is conflict. For those situations when parties are not able to resolve conflict, maintaining a level playing field between parties requires that each party has full knowledge of the steps to resolve conflicts and detailed information about rights at each step. The process for resolving conflict, for simplicity's sake, involves giving parties access to as much information as necessary, and then giving them an equal opportunity to state their case before an impartial hearing officer. If the dispute continues, parties have the American right to resolve the issue in court.

The regulations that describe the processes to resolve conflicts are numerous. The processes for resolving conflicts end up looking fairly legalistic. What must be kept in mind however, is that these processes are used relatively infrequently and only for those few conflicts that parents and districts are unable to resolve. Working together collaboratively does, in fact, work most of the time.

The Special Education Processes in Plain English

The special education process assumes that the parent has special knowledge of and overall responsibility for the child. The school district has overall responsibility to provide an education to the student and employs (or contracts with) people who have knowledge of disabilities. The steps in the special education process can be briefly described, as follows:

- Step 1:** If someone suspects a student of having a disability and needing special education services, the initial referral is written and given to the district. The district involves the parents.
- Step 2:** Experts complete initial evaluations of the child, include input from parents, and prepare a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) report that summarizes their recommendations. The MET report recommends whether there is evidence of disability and need for special education services.
- Step 3:** The school reviews diagnostic information and the MET report with the parents.
- Step 4:** The two parties meet at an Individualized Education Planning Team (IEPT) meeting to decide if a disability exists and if the student needs special education services.

Continued on page 25...

Dispute Resolution Update

Making Sense of the Special Education Process Helps Participants Avoid Confusion and Conflict (cont. from page 24...)

The parties document their decision in an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If eligibility and need exist, the parties also use the IEP to identify instructional outcomes, identify how the district will work toward those outcomes, and identify consideration of a variety of factors (e.g., placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE)).

- Step 5:** The district implements the IEP and informs the parents about the student's progress.
- Step 6:** The parties meet at least once yearly to review and revise the IEP.
- Step 7:** At least every three years, the parties re-evaluate disability, need, and overall progress and set future priorities.

Special Education Legal Terms in Plain English

Given the overall process, it's appropriate to define some of the confusing terms identified earlier. Michigan has aligned state regulations with the applicable federal regulations; therefore, the following citations are taken from the final regulations implementing the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997*.

- **Consent, parental consent, written informed consent, informed consent, and informed parent consent** mean that the parent knows what the district wants to do, and has agreed to that, in writing [300.500(b)(1)].
- **Notice** means that one party (typically the district) has informed the other party (typically the parents) about something; notice can be oral or written [Section 300.561, 300.507(c)(1)].
- **Written notice** generally refers to the very detailed information the district must provide to the parent including what the district proposes to do for the student. This information to parents also identifies resources for parents if they have any questions. As the term states, the information must be in writing [Section 300.503(b)]. **Prior notice** means **prior written notice** and refers to those times when the district must provide this written notice to the parent before the district proposes any specific action involving the child [Section 300.503(a)].
- **Procedural safeguards** refers to the legal rights parents have [Section 300.504(b)]. **Procedural safeguards notice** refers to documents that identify all of the procedural safeguards [Sections 300.403, 300.500-300.529, 300.560-300.577, and 300.660-300.662].
- **Rights and the parent's rights** are general terms that people often use to refer to the more legal-sounding written notice and procedural safeguards.

Bringing the Processes and Terms Together in Plain English

Using the numbering system and description of the process described above (Steps 1-7), here is a review of what has to happen and when each event should take place:

- Step 1:** The district must let parents know, in writing, that someone suspects a disability and the district proposes to evaluate the child. At the same time, the district must also give the parent prior written notice that describes what the district proposes to do and a copy of the procedural safeguards. Typically, the district gives the parent a copy of the "Parent Handbook" developed by the intermediate school district. This document often describes information and processes in language that is easy to understand. The district cannot act on the referral until the parent consents, in

writing, that she/he agrees to the district's proposal and has been informed of his/her rights.

- Step 2:** The student is evaluated. The evaluation can be directly completed by district staff, evaluators with whom the district contracts, or an evaluator to whom the parties mutually agree. School personnel complete a MET report that reflects parent input.
- Step 3:** District personnel contact the student's parents to review evaluations and the MET report (this is often done during Step 4).
- Step 4:** The parties schedule an initial IEPT meeting. The district must schedule this meeting at a time when parents can attend and must inform parents that the meeting will occur. Parent attendance is not an absolute requirement. At the IEPT meeting, the team makes a decision about eligibility and need and documents its decision in an initial IEP. At the end of Step 4, the district must again inform parents in writing, about the district's decision. The district must again give the parents prior written notice describing what the district proposes or wants to do (this is typically a copy of the initial IEP itself and a copy of the procedural safeguards). The district cannot act on this decision until the parents consent, in writing, that they have been informed of rights and agree to the district's proposal.
- Step 5:** Assuming that the parents provide written consent, the district begins to implement the IEP. The district must inform the parents about the student's progress on goals and objectives.
- Step 6:** The IEPT meets (at least once per year, but more often if needed) to review the student's progress and revise the IEP. The district must inform the parents of this meeting and make efforts to involve them. After completing the IEP, the district must provide the parents with prior written notice that describes what the district wants to do (again, this is typically a copy of the IEP and a copy of the procedural safeguards). However, unlike Step 4, this is not an initial IEP and, under most circumstances, the district does not need parental consent to implement the IEP.
- Step 7:** If the district thinks no new assessment or re-evaluation is needed, the district must inform the parents in writing. If the parents think additional assessments or a re-evaluation would be helpful, the parents must inform the district. If the district wants to conduct additional assessments, the district must get prior written consent from the parents. After completing any evaluation activity, the district must again invite the parents to attend an IEPT meeting to review the previous IEP, update the diagnostic information if needed, and revise the IEP. After completing the IEP, the district must again provide the parents with prior written notice (describing what the district wants to do and providing a copy of the procedural safeguards). Under most circumstances, the district does not need to request parent consent to implement the IEP.

Some Additional Points

The above discussion refers to events that should occur when the district provides written notice to parents indicating that the district proposes to act on behalf of the child (e.g., begin a special education evaluation on a child, provide a special education related service, provide a special education program, or change an annual

Continued on page 26...

MDE Holds Public Hearings and a Period of Public Comment on Special Education Policies and Procedures

The *Administrative Rules for Special Education* (Rules) took effect on June 6, 2002. Based upon changes that were made from the previous Rules, it is necessary to update several documents that implement the Rules. The Michigan Department of Education is revising the following documents and presenting them for a period of public comment which began Aug. 1, 2002 and continues through October 31, 2002.

- *ISD Plan Criteria*
- *Monitoring Standards*
- *IEP Manual and Forms*
- *Procedural Safeguards*
- *Mediation Procedures*
- *Procedures for Conducting a Hearing on Objections to the ISD Plan*
- *Procedures for the Selection and Appointment of Hearing Officers*
- *New Question and Answer Document to Replace the Official Interpretations*
- *Complaint Procedures*
- *Policy for the Appointment of a Surrogate Parent for Special Education Services*
- *Inclusive Education Position Statement*

To view a portable document format (PDF) file of the forms and to submit comments via the Web, go to www.michigansig.org/NewsView.asp?id=53.

The documents are also accessible at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), at each intermediate school district, and on the MDE Web site at www.michigan.gov/mde (select from the list of "What's New?").

All comments will be reviewed and considered in the final version of these documents. Written comments will be accepted by the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services through 5:00 p.m. on October 31, 2002.

Public hearings will be held by the MDE to receive comment on:

October 29, 2002 (6:30–9:00 p.m.)

October 30, 2002 (9:00–11:30 a.m.)

The Focus: Hope Center for Advanced Technologies

The Focus: Hope Conference Center
1400 Oakman Boulevard
Detroit Michigan 48236

If special accommodations are needed to participate in these public hearings, please call Ms. Meredith Hines at (517) 373-0924 by October 18, 2002.

Mail or Fax your comments to:

Mr. David Brock, Supervisor
Policy, Planning, and Compliance Program, OSE/EIS
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, fax (517) 373-7504
BrockD@michigan.gov

Dispute Resolution (continued from page 25...)

goal, etc). The regulations also speak to events when the written notice would identify that the district might refuse a specific action. Although examples of events when a district refuses are much less frequent than when a district proposes, they do exist (e.g., when the IEPT rejects some LRE options it is, in fact, refusing those options).

If anyone involved with the student thinks that the IEP should be revised, that person should inform the district in writing (this is also a referral, but not an initial referral). The district must convene an IEPT meeting, as outlined in Step 6. If parents disagree with the district's evaluations, they can request an independent educational evaluation (IEE). If parents disagree with any decision identified in an IEP, they may request a due process hearing. If parents request a due process hearing, the district must provide them with a copy of their "procedural safeguards."

The Rest of the Story

In one set of complaints that were filed, the complainants alleged that the districts did not provide them with written notice and information on procedural safeguards when the districts scheduled IEPT meetings. The OSE/EIS ruled there were no violations because districts were not required to provide that information when scheduling the IEPT meetings.

In another set of complaints, the complainants alleged that districts did not provide parents with written notice and "procedural

safeguards" following the IEPT meetings. The OSE/EIS ruled that the involved districts provided prior written notice and procedural safeguards to the parents when inviting the parents to the IEPT meeting, but did not provide these after completing the IEPs. The OSE/EIS found these districts in violation and ordered them to revise their processes for providing written notice and procedural safeguards. In a third set of complaints, the OSE/EIS concluded violations because districts provided the parent with written notice (i.e., a copy of the IEP) but did not offer them a copy of their procedural safeguards following the IEPT meeting.

For more information, contact:

Ron Greiner
Office of Special Education and
Early Intervention Services
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 335-0461, fax (517) 373-7504
GreinerR@michigan.gov

Editor's note: Examples where language in the Rules may cause confusion:

340.1721(1), 340.1721b(6), 340.1722a(2)(3)(4), 340.1723a, 340.1723b, 340.1723c(2)(e), 340.1724(1)(9), 340.1725(2)(g), 340.1725d, 340.1757(b), 340.1823 Part 1. Section 1.1(2), 340.1837(2), 340.1838(5)(c), and 340.1869(a)

Future Leaders Debate Real Issues

Aimee Cain, CEN Program Assistant

On Sunday, June 23, 2002, 28 high school juniors and seniors were warmly welcomed to the third Annual Heidi Van Arnem Michigan Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF) at Michigan State University. It was a five-day forum with a full schedule of various trainings and events, including a one-day visit to the state capitol. With help and support from mentors and other staff members, students created a bill that was debated by the House Appropriations Committee during a scheduled "legislative day."

The group gathered and proceeded through the historical Michigan State Capitol to the House Appropriations room. With the help of the mentors, students found their seats in the large leather chairs and embraced the responsibility of serving as a representative for a day.

Representative Laura Toy and Representative Doug Spade gave encouraging speeches to the future leaders. Both representatives gave sound advice, reminding students not to allow their disabilities to get in their way. They stressed the importance of setting reachable goals. When it was the students' turn to step in as representatives, Representative Spade stayed as a mentor and a mediator.

The chair called the meeting to order and House Bill 2002 was introduced in an effort to require mandatory training for all school teachers assessing technology when dealing with students with disabilities. If passed, the bill will make it mandatory for all teachers to attend a five-day technology training over a period of five years.

The 27 state representatives offered their opinions for or against the bill. One representative asked, "Teachers love their students, so why wouldn't they want to take the course?" Another representative argued, "By the time the teacher takes the course, the technology will be out of date; five years is too long." Other questions for discussion included funding for the training, how it will affect the students, the teachers, and the community. Representative Spade explained how the bill would proceed on a regular day. The student representatives were commended for their efforts and given advice on handling future legislative situations.

"I was impressed with how the debate was conducted; the students showed a level of commitment," said Gerry Mutty, director of the Michigan Commission on Disabilities Concerns. The chair asked for final comments before he closed the debate. After the roll call and vote, the bill passed and everyone cheered. After the debate, Representative Spade gave a grand tour of the House floor. The only time a visitor is allowed on the floor is when he/she is escorted by a representative. It was a great privilege.

Not many students have the honor to sit in the House Appropriations room and become a representative for the day. These students know what they are capable of doing and appreciate the difference it will make. That is why, out of over 50 applicants, 28 students were picked.

MYLF is a unique leadership program based on mentor relationships and developing leadership qualities. "The students learn that they can be successful adults through the mentors," Mutty said.



Students, mentors, staff members, and volunteers participating in the Michigan Youth Leadership Forum gathered at the State Capitol for a special "Legislative Day."

The forum offered students the opportunity to learn from each other and from successful adults with disabilities who are recognized as leaders and role models. The forum is coordinated by the Michigan Commission on Disabilities Concerns (MDCDC). Students leave the forum with lifelong friends and encouragement for a lifetime of success. Jeanette Voice, a student who attended the forum, said, "I looked forward to coming; the forum reached all my expectations." Amber Miller, who attended the 2000 MYLF and returned as a mentor this year, said, "I am not afraid of having a disability; I can be myself."

For more information, contact:
Gerry Mutty
Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns
Family Independence Agency
320 N. Washington Square, Suite 250
P.O. Box 30659
Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 334-8989 (VOICE)
(877) 499-6232 (toll free, VOICE/TTY)
www.mfia.state.mi.us/mcdc/mcdc.html
muttyg@michigan.gov

Michigan Commission on Disability Concern Executive Director Gerry Mutty Stands behind the Michigan Youth Leadership Forum

Judy Winter, Writer

When discussing his impressive career achievements, Gerry Mutty prefers to shine the spotlight on the accomplishments of people with disabilities. The executive director of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns (MCDC) has passionately supported disability rights throughout his professional career.

The 54-year-old Mutty agreed to the *Newsline* interview to help publicize the Michigan Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF), a five-day leadership workshop for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities held in June at Michigan State University. "I don't need that other stuff," Mutty says with a smile (see "Future Leaders Debate Read Issues" on page 27).

A soft-spoken and humble man, Mutty is responsible for overseeing MYLF as part of his administrative and budgetary responsibilities with the agency responsible for responding to and advocating for 1.9 million people in Michigan with disabilities. "When asked to rate the forum on a scale of 1 to 10, one young man gave it a 15," Mutty says proudly. "Now, how cool is that?" Another student wrote, "This is a place where it's okay to be me."

Mutty has a bachelor's degree in social science from Michigan State University and a master's in public administration from Western Michigan University. He's a die-hard Boston Red Sox fan who's been married for 31 years and has two daughters. Mary is an animal trainer at the Detroit Zoo and Emily is the youth minister at a Holt church.

When he was a Michigan State University student, Mutty spent time working at a state institution in Howell for adults with disabilities. It fueled his passion for disability rights and still impacts his work 35 years later. "I remember rows of beds with bodies on white sheets, where you couldn't distinguish arms from legs, and people with large heads, the result of untreated hydrocephalus." You don't forget images like that," Mutty says. "I remember asking, 'How did this happen?'"

Some residents had only mild learning disabilities, but had spent up to 30 years in the institution. "A lot of them would be in the com-

munity today," he explains. The injustices he saw caused Mutty to become part of the 1970's movement to place people with special needs back into their communities. "When I get discouraged about how far we have to go, I remember that 17,000 people once lived in institution in Michigan. Now there are only a few hundred and kids with special needs are in our neighborhood schools," Mutty explains. "That's progress."

At the beginning of the MYLF week, Mutty tells the students that many of them would have once been institutionalized. "They need to know the importance of their history," he says, stressing the need to pass the advocacy baton to the younger generation. "The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) is slowly being chipped away. People get comfortable and new generations are not as diligent." The forum prioritizes discussions about the history of disability rights, the laws protecting those rights and personal advocacy efforts. A highlight of the week is work on a House Appropriations bill, which students argue at the State Capitol. "We need the energy, enthusiasm, and passion of people who care deeply about this issue," Mutty explains.

He is proud of the MYLF success stories, including a student delegate, Miranda Pelikan from Schoolcraft, Michigan, who was recently appointed to the National Youth Advisory Council to the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities. "We create a place that feels safe, where it's okay for students to talk about their disabilities," Mutty says of the forum. "We tell them it's okay to stand up for who you are and for what you believe."

Mutty plans to retire in May and eventually return to Maine, where he was born and raised. Reflecting on his career, Mutty says his biggest career disappointment is seeing the infighting that still exists among disability groups. He thought he would see a more unified voting block by now, but he remains hopeful.

The days spent advocating for people with disabilities are not over. "There is no way I can walk away from the disability rights movement, ever," Gerry Mutty says with conviction. "There's still way too much to be done."



Gerry Mutty, Executive Director,
Michigan Commission on Disability
Concerns (MCDC)



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For more information, contact:

Gerry Mutty
(517) 334-8000 (VOICE/TTY)
muttyg@michigan.gov